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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE MEETING IN THE LOUVRE.—"THE INTRODUCTION WAS NOT NEEDED. WE HAVE MET BEFORE!"]

KENNETH'S CHOICE.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Brooks was very proud of his children, and rather disposed in a general way to accept their opinions as better than his own; but he found it very difficult to adopt Austin's view of Queenie's conduct.

Poor Nell, faithful to the promise extorted from her, had never told the young man of the strange discovery that she and his darling were not sisters; but in spite of this omission old Mrs. Brooks, who knew something of the world, had gathered a pretty correct view of the case. The beautiful, ambitious girl had thought his son a grand match when she lived in a little cottage; but now, taken up by rich relations, she meant to try whether her face would not purchase even better fortune than to be the mistress of the Manor House. Such was the conclusion of the old man, who had never spoken a word to Queenie in his life, but yet judged her far

more correctly than his son, who worshipped her; and again and again the father wished regretfully his boy's choice had fallen on Nell, little guessing that it would have been as impossible for Nell to love Austin as it would have been to her to marry him without that sentiment.

There was a long silence when the two men had left the cottage. Then Austin broke out impatiently and defiantly, as though his father had accused his love of falseness.

"I don't believe a word of it. Queenie always said Nell was not like her. They might be sisters, but they are as different as possible. She must have left some message for me, and that girl is keeping it back for her own ends!"

"Nonsense!" said old Samuel, quickly. "Austin, your disappointment makes you unjust. That little girl yonder couldn't tell a lie if she tried."

Austin turned round on him.

"Then how do you explain things, sir?"

Mr. Brooks hardly enjoyed the question. In his heart he thoroughly distrusted the

missing girl, but he felt it would be useless to say so.

"Letters do miscarry sometimes," he remarked, sententiously. "Hers may have done so."

Austin shook his head.

"That won't do, father. Granted her letter to me might miscarry; one to her sister would hardly do so too! Besides, in ten weeks there would be time for her to find out it had done so and write again. No, if we allow Nell has nothing to do with it we can only take one view, and conclude the grandmother is at the bottom of it!"

This suggestion delighted Mr. Brooks. He wished to spare Queenie blame to please his son, and Nell to please himself, therefore it was quite a comfort to find a third person whom they could unite amicably in condemning.

"Depend upon it, that's it, Austin. Old women are awfully ambitious. She didn't understand your prospects, and wanted to out the girl off from any one she had known in her poorer days, so she stopped the letters; then your young lady felt offended and didn't

write again. I wonder I never thought of it before; that explains everything beautifully."

Austin groaned.

"To you, perhaps, father; but just think of the misery it means for me?"

"Misery! my dear boy, you can't care for the meanness of an old woman who has never seen you!"

"But Queenie?"

"We agreed it was not her fault!"

"But it cuts her off from me as much as if it were. You argue that, hurt at my silence she won't write again, and if she did her grandmother would stop the letter. Then how am I to find her?"

Mr. Brooks sighed.

"I don't know!"

Things were going very much against him. He had had bright visions of Austin marrying in a few weeks' time and settling with his bride at the Manor House to the infinite content of Mopsy and her father. But now it seemed Austin had set his affections on a girl who not only seemed utterly unattainable, but who had vanished mysteriously.

"I shall find her!" said the young man, hopefully. "If I search the world over I will find my darling!"

Many fathers would have remarked that at that rate he might as well have remained first officer of the *Egyptian* for any comfort he would be at home. But Mr. Brooks was a kindly-natured man and suppressed that speech, though certainly it rose to his lips.

"My boy!" he said, mildly. "women! it is better for you to give her up. There seems to me to be nothing but disappointment in store for you if you persist."

"Would you have given my mother up?"

"That was different. We'd loved each other from boy and girl. We grew the man and one of each other's family. Now it seems to me, Austin, you know nothing of this Margaret Marsh, except that she is beautiful!"

"I know she loves me!"

"Oh! you asked her then?"

Austin coloured.

"I did not mean to deceive you, father. I saw her the last night before we went to London, and she promised to wait for me."

"Well, three months is not so very long to wait, but it seems to have been too long for me."

"You are angry, sir!"

"No, but I am troubled. This makes things look very dark. If she was engaged to you nothing could explain her non-writing."

"I thought we were she had written, and her grandmother had stopped the letter."

"But an engagement to my son is a very good prospect for a young girl. I think it ought to satisfy any grandmother. An old woman might object to an idle flirtation, but this was different. She might be far richer than her son's widow, who was content to live in a beggarly little cottage; but I don't think she could be grand enough to look down on the Manor House!"

"If only Mrs. Marsh had lived!"

"I expect, poor woman, it was a happy release. She had one of the saddest faces I ever saw, and she lived on an annuity of sixty pounds a year!"

"Who told you?"

"The vicar! He used to cash her cheques for her."

"Then, father, we must know who sent them. That would be a clue."

"I don't see it—the annual allowance most likely came from her husband's employer!"

"Well, he would know the grandmother's address. Father! let's call on the vicar. If you won't come with me I must go alone."

Poor Mr. Brooks! He followed meekly in his boy's wake; and very soon they were at the vicarage gates, and duly shown into the study. The older man began the conversation. He had had several meetings with Mr. Baillie and liked him very much, while the Vicar was indebted to the master of

the Manor House for many a generous aid to local charities. Samuel Brooks in his simple way went straight to the point.

"We want you to give us Miss Marsh's address, Mr. Baillie. This lad of mine is engaged to her! And what with his being at sea and her going away in such a hurry, they have lost sight of each other."

Mr. Baillie started.

"Your son engaged to Miss Marsh! Which one?"

"Queenie," replied Austin, frankly. "We have been to her sister, but she denied all knowledge of her."

"Poor child!" said the Vicar pityingly. "Well, I mean. The denial is truthful enough; from the day Miss Marsh left the Cottage her sister has heard nothing of her. I don't want to hurt your feelings, young man, if you're engaged to her, but in my opinion, Miss Marsh has behaved abominably!"

"I'd rather not talk about her behaviour, sir. I'm sure anything that seems strange could be explained. I want you to tell me where she is!"

"But I have no idea!"

"She couldn't disappear like this, and as one saw a clue!" said poor Austin sadly. "You were her mother's friend, surely you know where her bones of Miss Marsh's family? As Queenie is with her grandmother, that would help us."

"I was Mrs. Marsh's friend, and I am proud to own it. From the day she came to Marston, a young widow eighteen years ago, and I read the funeral notice over her a few weeks since I was her friend; but I never heard her speak of any relations other than her own or her husband's; and, what is more, I don't believe she had any!"

"But Queenie is with her grandmother!"

"So Mr. Baillie told me, and I can see the poor child believes it; but some years ago I had a long conversation with Mrs. Marsh, and she assured me that there was not a single relation left of her own or her husband's, may as well confess the truth. I am not ashamed to say it was the dearest wish of my heart to marry Mrs. Marsh."

"That old lady," exclaimed Samuel, with more frankness than politeness.

"She was barely forty when she died. She came here a widow of twenty-two, with hair as white as snow, bleached in one night by the shock of her husband's death. Her heart was buried in her grave, and so I was released, but we were warm friends to her dying day, and I shall never believe she deceived me."

Mr. Brooks rubbed his forehead; the man grew stranger and stranger!

"We understood you managed Mrs. Marsh's money matters," said Austin gravely. "We thought from that you must know something of her family?"

The Vicar answered promptly.

"Her income came to me once a month in the form of a cheque signed W. Ashwin. I know Mr. Ashwin was her husband's employer at the time of his death, and took a great interest in the girl. He used to write from time to time to me and send them little presents. It was he who took the Cottage for them years ago and furnished it. He called on me at the time before Mrs. Marsh arrived, and begged me to do anything I could for her, as she had known a great deal of trouble."

"Not Ashwin the lawyer?"

"The same! He came down the day of Mrs. Marsh's death and again for the funeral. He was appointed guardian to both the girls, and if you go to him I have no doubt you will hear anything he can tell you."

This was something. Austin wrung the Vicar's hand, Mr. Brooks looked infinitely relieved.

"We shall be coming to you soon, sir, to read the marriage service for them. I don't approve of long engagements, and the poor mother wouldn't be grieved if the girl put off her black frock just for one day!"

Mr. Baillie promised to officiate, and wished all possible happiness to the young couple, but

he doubted, in his own mind, whether he should ever marry Queenie young Brooks. He had read the girl's whiffling, ambitious nature more correctly than most people, and he never believed she would settle down to a quiet country life.

To London travelled the impatient Austin by the first train the next day; and very early in the morning presented himself at Mr. Ashwin's office, only to hear that gentleman had started the night before for the continent, where his movements were quite uncertain.

The poor young man felt bewildered. Was there no tracking his beautiful darling? Was she, indeed, lost to him for all time?

There was nothing for it but to go home, first leaving his card with Mr. Ashwin's partner, accompanied by an earnest request to have the lawyer's address sent to him the first moment it reached the office.

But the second day after his return to the Manor House he troubled himself no longer about Mr. Ashwin, for a letter had come to him in a round, girlish hand, bearing the London postmark; and, little as it really told or promised, it was welcome as dew to the dry parched earth.

"My dear Austin, I hope you may find this letter waiting for you when you come home or else I fear you will have very hard thoughts of me."

"When mother died my grandmother seemed to take me and though I didn't want to go they said I must that I belonged to her, and couldn't be anything she didn't like until I was twenty-one—more than two long years! So you see, dear, I can't keep my promise and be your wife, for you wouldn't like to wait all that time. And grandmother is very strict; she won't even let me see anyone, or write a letter she does not read. I am at my wit's end how to get this posted, but I shall manage it somehow. All has turned out so different from what we hoped that evening in the Chestnut Valley. I can hardly bear to think of the dear old times! Everyone is very kind to me. I dare not wear your ring, but I have got it safe among my treasures. Same day, when you have forgotten me and married someone else, I will send it back to you, but I can't bear to part with it now. It reminds me of the past and all the happy days I have spent in Marston. You are quite free, dear Austin, for it would not be right to bind you to one, who, for more than two years, must not even write to you. Good-bye! I dare say some day you will meet a nice girl who will make you far happier than you could have been with."

"QUEENIE."

And this letter, so far from making the infuriated Austin accept his freedom, kept him more deeply in bondage than ever. To his mind it fully absolved his darling from all charge of fickleness, and proved her to be as true and unselfish as she was beautiful. If his father and Mr. Baillie—to whom he confided the substance of her letter—hardly held this opinion, it must be remembered they were no longer young. They had not the open, ingenuous nature of the honest sailor, and, most important of all, they were not in love with Queenie!

CHAPTER IX.

LORD COMBERMERNE disappointed the gentle widow who loved him, and would so fain have secured his prosperity by a marriage with his remote cousin, Margaret St. Clune. Perhaps the young Earl was not favourably impressed with the heiress at the meeting in the Marston Cottage. Perhaps his heart was still sore at Kathleen's desertion; for, while the Countess was daily expecting him at White Indies, she received a letter saying he had gone abroad.

It was a wise step, though none of his friends approved it. Poor Ken would have met nothing but humiliations in London. Abroad, travelling as a bachelor and dropping his onerous title, he had enough for every want. He was

not brought into constant meetings with mere seeming friends. He had ample leisure for his literary pursuits, and to ponder over the question whether he should or should not become a suitor for the hand of Margaret St. Clune.

There was one contingency he had not understood at first, but which Mr. Ashwin was careful to explain to him. If he accepted his cousin Geoffrey's directions and proposed to the heiress, even if she refused him, he inherited the Abbey and half its revenues.

It seemed to poor Kenneth his cousin had much the best of it. At worst she only lost half the property, unless she married some utterly worthless character (and that she could do without for it if she waited till she was twenty-five) without her guardian's consent, and even then the wealth she forfeited was secured to her children.

Yes, she had much the best of it; while, as for poor Kenneth, there was only one way in which he could possess the Abbey—by proposing to Miss St. Clune.

He told Mr. Ashwin he should have plenty of time to think over things quietly abroad; but, as a matter of fact, he avoided thinking of them at all. He hated worry, and had all a man's failing of deferring disagreeable duties; and so "Mr. St. Clune" enjoyed himself as much as though he had not to decide within the next two years whether he would reign as master at his ancestral estate, or go through life as a pauper Earl.

Very soon after he left England the news reached him of Kathleen's marriage, to his uncle. He was not surprised; and, after the first pang, could almost smile at the thought of his ladylove in the capacity of aunt. But though the blow was not unexpected, it left its mark on Kenneth. It seemed to remove his past, that idle, careless past wherein he had been nothing but an idle dreamer, very far from him, and give him graver, sterner thoughts. And with these thoughts came the conviction that if he did not marry Miss St. Clune, he would, in a great measure, have missed his destiny.

He was born with political talents and a taste for management. He would be far more in his element as master of the Abbey than as a needy man about town with only the precarious earnings of his profession to add to his three hundred a year. And he had almost made up his mind to return to England and commence his consularship, when unexpected circumstances gave his residence in Paris a new and unexpected charm.

He was in the Louvre one spring afternoon—almost a year after his cousin's death, when, among the sightseers who surveyed the galleries, he saw a face he thought he knew, though he could not recollect its owner's name, nor under what circumstances he had met her.

It was a young girl dressed simply in black, a small lace hat on the top of her gold-tinted hair, her eyes blue as the sapphire itself, and, in her hand, a bunch of primroses. Those flowers carried Kenneth back to a far different scene.

He was in the Strand once more aiding a shabby little maiden from the country to pick up her scattered nosegay, and hearing her calmly announce she meant to "walk" to Fulham. True, the toilet had changed from one of neat poverty to that of tasteful elegance. The thin cheeks had the bloom of health, the golden hair was dressed more fashionably; but the blue eyes, the wistful expression of the mouth, and the general, simple dignity, were unaltered.

Kenneth knew as soon as he looked at the primroses that he stood in the presence of Helena Marsh.

Would he have spoken to her? Perhaps, but the point was decided for him. An elderly gentleman, evidently her escort, turned to him with outstretched hand.

"Kenneth, is it possible?"

Ken smiled with genuine satisfaction. "Why, it's Mr. Carew!"

He had known the artist as long as he could remember, and was, in fact, a great favourite with the eccentric genius, who had never quite forgiven him for not embracing art as a career. To see Mr. Carew now brought such a flood of recollections back to the young man that after that first greeting he was absolutely silent.

"Hey day!" cried Bruce Carew, "you are altered! What on earth has changed you into such a gloomy, misanthropical looking creature?"

Kenneth laughed. "I was thinking how much had happened since I saw you, Mr. Carew."

"I daresay. You were going to be a very grand gentleman and marry the prettiest girl in London if I remember right. Haven't you done so?"

It was impossible to be offended. The artist put his questions with all the simplicity of a child, and with an air of real interest.

"I don't think there's anything grand about me," said Ken, quietly, "and I haven't married anyone. I am here all alone, Mr. Carew!"

"Then you are not so fortunate as I am. I'm staying with my sister and her husband, and we have grand times. Don't we, Nell?"

Nell smiled. "We have very pleasant ones, Uncle Bruce!"

"She's not my niece really, you know," explained Mr. Carew. "My sister adopted her, but somehow Nell has settled down among us as naturally as though she had been born Miss Ainslie. That's what they call her. Now I'm sure I've introduced you in proper form!"

"Only it was not needed. We have met before!"

"Good gracious! Never!"

"At Marden!"

Mr. Carew looked reproachfully at Nell. "You told me, child, there were no gentlemen in Marden except the Vicar and the doctor. Kenneth St. Clune is a most unruly fellow, but still he's a gentleman."

"Miss Ainslie has not wronged me," explained Ken. "I only went to Marden once with my friend, Mr. Ashwin. To tell you a secret, it is the fault of Miss Ainslie's foster sister. I am not the 'grand gentleman' I intended to be."

"Ah, I remember now. She turned out a fine lady. I don't think you ever told us her real name, Nell. Anyway, child, she must be a heartless puss to have taken no notice of you all these months."

"Queenie always hated letter-writing," said Nell, ever ready to defend the absent; "but oh! I should like to know how she is. Lord Combermere, do you often see her?"

Ken looked round cautiously.

"Miss Ainslie, please never breathe that name again. If anyone hears you my misfortune will get about!"

"What misfortune?"

"That of having a title without riches to support it. Why, if my identity were discovered, my hotel bill would swell terribly. I am plain Mr. St. Clune, please remember."

"And do you often see Queenie?"

"I have never seen her since that day!"

"But I thought you were cousins?"

"So we are."

"And you said you knew her grandmother?"

"I do, most intimately; but—shall I shock you, I wonder—I don't like beauties!"

Nell laughed.

"What an idea!"

"I can give you news of Miss St. Clune, however. She was presented at Court last month, and her beauty created a sensation (few people possess my bad taste). Her grandmother declares half London to be in love with her!"

"Or her fortune!" put in Mr. Carew, gravely.

"Nonsense, uncle!" said Nell. "You have never seen her. She is perfectly lovely. I assure you!"

"And she can't find ten minutes to write to you? Black ingratitude I call it!"

Mr. St. Clune accepted an invitation to dine with the artist, who, though nominally staying with his sister, was very erratic in his proceedings, and much liked to eat his dinner at a restaurant when he could pick up a guest; so the two gentlemen left Nell at the door of the Ainslie's apartment, and adjourned to order their repast.

"And now that the child is gone," said Bruce Carew, kindly, "let me apologize. I had quite forgotten all your misfortunes, or I would never have reminded you of them. I read the announcement of Miss Dean's wedding, and felt ashamed of womankind."

"She was only true to her training."

"And your cousin's will I thought it iniquitous, and I think so more than ever now I know the bride he destined for you is poor Nell's foster-sister."

"Why?" asked Kenneth, abruptly. "What do you know of her? What has she done?"

But the artist's only complaint was her treatment of his favourite. Kenneth did not defend her, he asked instead,—

"Have you known Miss Marsh long?"

"Who?"

"I mean Miss Ainslie."

"Oh, Nell! No; not long. About a year ago she came to Fulham, a little, weary child, and asked me (my sister was in Italy, so there was no one else to ask) how she could earn her own living? Her mother and sister wanted her to sit down with folded hands and be poor, because it was not genteel to work; but the child had an idea there was something in the world nobler than sham gentility. I took to the child at once. You've no idea what a pretty picture she made when I first saw her, asleep on a crimson sofa with a bunch of yellow primroses on the top of her shabby black frock!"

"And forthwith your sister adopted her?"

"My sister was in Italy, I tell you. I made the child sit to me for a picture—it'll be in the Academy next month, you must run over and look at it—but her mother died, and her sister forsook her before Marion and Ainslie came back; then, in spite of all I could say, they adopted her."

"You don't mean you objected to it?"

"I did, heartily!"

"But why? She is far too young and pretty to take care of herself!"

"Of course, but they might have called her a friend, or even a companion. I hate shame, and I am sure harm will come of it."

"But how?"

Bruce Carew shook his head.

"I have not an idea. They're rich enough to adopt half-a-dozen girls if the fancy took them; and I own they are not changeable; but, for all that, I'm sorry they ever took it into their heads to adopt Nell."

"Will you introduce me to your sister?"

"With pleasure. As Mr. St. Clune?"

"Yes."

Nell went home with a strange fluttering at her heart. Perhaps until that meeting with Kenneth she had never realized the gulf between her position and Queenie's. This handsome, stately gentleman, with noble face and bearing, was Queenie's own cousin. She belonged to his world, was his equal, and Nell was nothing but a humble, unknown girl, adopted out of pity by the wealthy Ainslies.

Bruce Carew was right. It would have been wiser far had that adoption never been made. Husband and wife loved her dearly, but they did not understand her the least in the world. How should they? Cloudless prosperity had been their constant lot.

Nell had been brought up in poverty, with the shadow of her mother's grief ever hanging over her. She was very fond of her new guardians, and very grateful to them; but the rôle of idle young lady hardly suited her; and but for Bruce Carew she would have had many a lonely hour. As it was, she had nothing to fill up the void in her life made by her mother's death and Queenie's loss. Good

honest work would have been better for her in the end than the luxurious ease she enjoyed with the Ainslies. Nell often thought she ought to be doing something. She had no object in life. Time drifted on. She wanted to be up and doing.

Mrs. Ainslie laughed at the idea.

"I think you are generally doing something," she said, carelessly. "I never see you idling. All we want is to make you happy. You have known enough sorrow in your short life."

And so the girl's aspirations were stifled, and remorseful as she felt, at such ingratitude, it dawned on her that she was almost as much misunderstood at Oakley Cottage as she had been at Marden. Then came the foreign trip, and the almost constant society of Bruce Carew. The Ainslies were delighted to see the girl brighten as a flower in the sunshine, and rejoiced at Nell's evident delight in all she saw.

"She is perfectly happy," said Marion to Mr. Ainslie; "but, Hugh, we shall not keep her long. With that face she is sure to marry early."

Mr. St. Clune received a very gracious welcome from Mrs. Ainslie. Although not very learned in the peerage, she knew he was related to a nobleman; and, truth to say, she was just a little fond of titles. She was still an elegant and attractive woman. She liked the society of handsome, aristocratic men, and so a warm greeting always awaited Kenneth at the Rue St. Marie. And in a little while he spent almost as much of his time there as Bruce Carew himself.

And all the while he believed firmly he went for the artist's sake. Carew was such a good fellow, and his relations so sincere in their welcomes; it was so pleasant to meet such a simple homely family party, and to be welcomed for himself, not for the handle to his name, or the belief he would be rich.

The Ainslies excelled in the art of making people feel at home. There was neither show nor ostentation in their hospitality. They treated their guest like an old friend, and Kenneth enjoyed himself without ever troubling to examine into his own heart, and search out the cause why Mrs. Ainslie's salon was such a favourite resort to him.

Naturally he saw a great deal of Nell. The only two young people of the party, it was almost a matter of course they would often be paired off together. And Nell was a charming companion—a girl who expected neither compliments nor pretty speeches, but who would listen with bright, inquiring eyes to all he told her of himself and his history, and who would give him a hearty sympathy, offered as naturally and as simply as though she were his sister.

"I should like us to be friends," he told her not many days after that meeting in the Louvre. "There is something so strange and remarkable about our three meetings that I can never feel you are a stranger. Can't you think me a kind of cousin, since you are Miss St. Clune's sister?"

Nell shook her head.

"I am not her sister, really. No, we cannot be consins; but I should like to be your friend."

That was the compact—friendship and nothing more; but, ah, me! friendship is a dangerous bond between a beautiful, romantic girl of twenty and a fascinating man five years her senior, whose heart is just recovering from a heavy disappointment. Many and many a heart has been caught in the rebound; but perhaps the Earl of Combermere did not know this. He never thought of love in connection with Nell, but he liked to be with her. He loved to hear her sing, and, better still, he loved to talk to her of himself, and hear her low sweet voiced sympathy.

"You and St. Clune seem great friends!" said Mr. Carew to Nell, one day, when they all began to talk of going to England. "You are growing quite inseparable!"

There was no blush on the girl's cheeks.

She never even looked confused. The artist felt relieved; at any rate, at present no harm had been done. When they were back in England he must put a stop to such very frequent intercourse.

"You will see Queenie in London?"

It was an assertion rather than a question, and it was spoken on Kenneth's farewell visit to Rue St. Marie. His plans were made now, and he returned to England the next day. The Ainslies would be at Oakley Cottage by the end of the following week.

"I suppose so!" and from the Earl's tone you would have said he did not particularly appreciate the honour in store for him. "You see I am very fond of my grandmother, and I couldn't well stay away!"

"Why should you? You are the nearest relation after Lady Combermere. You ought to be very fond of each other."

She spoke in all unconsciousness. She used the term "fond of" as a child of five might have done; but Kenneth had not forgotten Lord Combermere's will. He knew if he valued worldly prosperity, he ought, indeed, to "be fond of" Miss St. Clune, since no one else could give it him; but though he knew Nell spoke in all ignorance of his circumstances, the allusion nettled him.

"Can you 'be fond of' to order, Miss Ainslie? If so, you have your affections under far better control than I have. I confess I can't!"

Nell looked hurt.

"I did not mean to vex you!"

"I know," he said, penitent in a moment.

"I was abominably rude, Miss Ainslie. I'm afraid I have a horrid temper. Of course, as you say, Miss St. Clune and I ought to get on together, only somehow I feel certain we shall not."

"But why?" repeated Nell, in a puzzled voice. "Queenie likes most people, and she is very easy to get on with!"

"I hate dark women!"

"They are generally beautiful!" then she smiled suddenly; "but I forgot—you don't like beauties."

"You have remembered that?"

"I remember most things! I don't think I am good at forgetting."

Her last words sank into Kenneth's mind, and recurred to him often times afterwards with strange persistency. Alas, alas! there came a time—not so far off either—when he could have prayed with bitter intensity, he and she had not shared this failing. Better, far better, for them both if they had been "good at forgetting."

"Will you do me a favour, Lord Combermere?"

"I thought we had banished that name. What is it? You know you have only to tell me!"

"If you see Queenie—I mean when you see her—do not tell her you met me. You see," Nell's voice had a sort of sob in it, "we have drifted apart; fate has made her a great lady, and she has forgotten me. I shouldn't like her to think I wanted to make her remember me."

"I understand."

"And you will remember?"

"I will remember. I will never mention you to Miss St. Clune unless she first introduces your name."

"Thank you!"

"And we shall meet again soon. You will let me come to Oakley Cottage to bring you news of your foster-sister?"

Her reply was interrupted by the entrance of the Ainslies. Very warm, and friendly were their adieux to Kenneth, and of all the little party only one was thankful for his departure, and that one the person who had introduced him to them. Bruce Carew loved Kenneth but not as he loved Nell, and he understood perfectly the difficulties in the young man's path. He believed himself in love. Had Kenneth met with Nell after his choice was made, when Miss St. Clune had passed her twenty-first birthday, and by letting her pass it with-

out proposing, Ken had forfeited his property. Why, if the two young people had met there, the artist would have rejoiced, and said his favourite was the best wife in the world for Kenneth; but for more than a year longer the freedom of choice remained to Ken, and if he married in that time any other than the heiress, his bride would have to bear the odium of wrecking his fortunes. He would never reproach her himself, but his mother would not spare her.

So, on the whole, it was an intense relief to Bruce Carew when Lord Combermere left, not only without proposing to Nell, but without seeming conscious that he loved her. The artist whose eyes were keener than most people's, had found out days before that the love existed. From the moment he made that discovery his one anxiety was to get the young man away from Paris before he learned his own secret. And he learned it in a strange place, and with feelings so full of pain that Carew's honest heart would have ached had he known of them.

In the Academy, "on the line," hung the picture of the year, the Lily Maid of Asbolot, and by it stood a man with keenest pain stamped on his white face. Alas, alas! one look at those sweet features told him what the artist had known before. He loved the blue-eyed girl as his own soul; loved her not with the admiring worship he had given to Kathleen Dean, but with the fervent affection a man can only entertain for one with whom his mind is in perfect sympathy, and who is, indeed, his second self. And with that knowledge came an awful recollection she, poor child—although she knew it not—was the daughter of a suspected murderer, and he was Earl of Combermere, last descendant of one of the noblest lines in England.

He believed himself Gordon had been innocent, but public opinion had condemned him unanimously. Even if he threw pride aside—if he braved the fearful blight that might be cast on his wife's parentage! could he, dared he, marry Nell, since the man of whose murder her father died, accused was his mother's husband! Alas, alas! at this last thought despair entered Kenneth's heart. With a stifled groan he turned away; then pausing to apologize as by accident, he brushed against some ladies in the crowd, he recognized his dear old friend Lady Combermere and her grandchild.

(To be continued.)

THE GOLDEN HOPE.

—O—

CHAPTER XI.

Look to it well, and say you are well warn'd.

—Henry VI.

THE little kiosk of which Margaret Sorel had taken temporary possession was shaped after the fashion of those that adorn Turkish gardens, and was surmounted by a glittering dome which looked like gold in the sunlight. The walls were composed of jalousie shutters, now ajar, and the fresh, perfumed air swept through the pretty little chamber without restraint.

The floor was of marble, laid in a mosaic pattern; the panels between the shutters were slender mirrors; there was a luxurious Turkish couch in the centre of the room, a few books, and an antique Turkish scent-jar, overflowing with crushed and odorous rose-petals, completed the furniture.

The women's first act was to close all the shutters, and to secure them so that no one could look in upon her movements. The light that lingered, although dim, was sufficient for her purpose. She unlocked her travelling-bag, strewed its contents over the crimson couch, and proceeded to make her toilet with an aptness and readiness unmarred by her singular and unusual surroundings. She unbound her

long black hair, permitted it to flow over her shoulders without any other restraint than that afforded by a scarlet ribbon, which she bound around her brows.

From one of her toilet bottles she produced a dye, which gave to her beauty a gipsy complexion, and one of her boxes afforded her abundant carmine for her cheeks, which, under her treatment, soon glowed like twin-roses.

She then devoted her attention to her dress. Her riding-habit was exchanged for short, ample skirts, and a bright blue gown, whose hem reached only to her trim ankles. There was no need to exchange her Polish boots, for they were high and decorated with cords and tassels in profusion.

Her costume was completed by the addition of a wide scarlet cloak and a hood of the same material, from the sides of which her long black locks strayed in wild disorder.

Thus arrayed she was the perfect representation of a gipsy maid—quite as perfect as when, in the same costume and character, she had awakened the rapturous applause of crowded audiences.

She surveyed her reflection critically in her hand-mirror and the panels of the wall, startled by the fierce brightness of her eyes, and exultant in her perfect rendering of the character she had assumed.

"I shall do it!" she murmured, approvingly. "Even Richard Houghton would not know me now. I must refresh my mind in my part."

She took from her travelling-bag a small worn volume, full of cabalistic signs, which she studied for some minutes intently. The book was a compilation of fortune-teller's lore, explained the signification of dreams, and taught the art of chiromancy.

It was an invaluable assistant to one wishing to impose upon the silly or ignorant; but nothing could be more unsuitable to Miss Sorel's present purpose. She, however, thought differently. She reasoned to herself that Miss Glintwick, being an East Indian, and having a Hindoo mother, must necessarily be more or less superstitious. The very air of heathen India, she thought, with its ruby-eyed idols and its gorgeous temples, must be full of superstition, and no native could fail to be infected by it.

The strange, supernatural tales to which the Asiatics love to listen for hours together, and with which Hellice was no doubt familiar, had probably made her a willing and implicit believer in the fortune-teller's pretended art.

So thinking, she prepared herself for the part she intended to play. The book was connoed once or twice, and was then returned to its concealment.

Miss Sorel glanced over the volumes belonging to the place and found them to be books of poems belonging to Lady Redwoode.

"Very good," she thought. "This is Lady Redwoode's private resort. No one will wonder to find it looked and the key gone if the discovery be made. This is better than I expected."

She thrust the travelling-bag in a corner, gave a last look at her reflection in the mirrors, and cautiously opened the door.

There was no one within sight, and she made a quick egress, looked the portal behind her, and put the key in her pocket.

She then took her way to the mansion.

Her path led along the brink of the hill, past the waterfall beside which Sir Richard Houghton had first beheld Hellice, past arbours, summer-houses, and gardens, until at length she emerged into full view of the rear of the dwelling and in sight of the servants' hall.

She was totally unfamiliar with the grounds and mansion, and had expected to reach a different entrance, but she was not dissatisfied at her mistake when a rosy-cheeked maid emerged from the house and accosted her, inquiring if she could tell fortunes.

"Aye, that can I!" replied the pretended gipsy, with a low courtesy. "Shall I tell yours, my pretty girl?"

The maid blushed at the compliment and assented. Other servants came trooping out, and the fortune-teller was surrounded and called upon for evidences of her skill in the pretended art of reading the future. Their demands were complied with. Promises of speedy marriages, unexpected receipts of sums of money, the usual letters, and disappointments, were liberally dispensed to one and all, to the general satisfaction of the good-natured and credulous throng, and pieces of silver were showered upon the fortune-teller.

"If the young mistress could only see you!" said the girl who had first engaged Miss Sorel's attention, and whose faith was in a state of the highest activity. "An English gipsy might be a diversion to her, and I am sure she would pay you well!"

The fortune-teller drew the girl apart from the crowd and besought her to procure an interview between the young ladies and herself, offering her newly-acquired gains as a reward for the favour.

"I wish I could," sighed the girl, "but it would be as much as my place is worth. I could not even get speech with either of the young ladies, for I am only a kitchen-maid. Why, I might live here till I get grey without ever being directly spoken to by the young mistress. And I don't dare to ask Mrs. Renée to take you to Miss Avon's room. Mrs. Renée is Miss Glintwick's grandmother they say, and she's Hindoo, and has a pair of small black eyes that can read your soul; she reads the stars she says, and would be jealous of you, I make no doubt."

Finding the maid thus communicative, Miss Sorel questioned her artfully, and was made a partaker of all the gossip afloat in the servants' hall. The rival claims of the young ladies to the position of daughter and heiress to the Baroness were not discussed, only because not known. Lady Redwoode had preserved this secret from the household, who did not dream that any uncertainty attended the recognition of Miss Cecile. But the attentions of Mr. Andrew Forsythe to the heiress were commented upon, the surpassing beauty of Hellice extolled, and the fact of a relationship between the latter and the Hindoo insisted upon.

"Well, if you won't assist me, I must seek the young ladies for myself," said the pretended gipsy, when she had extracted all the information possible. "Look out for the handsome groom, my pretty maid."

With this parting injunction, which overwhelmed the girl with delight, and which seemed greatly to encourage a bashful, good-looking groom who had been eyeing the maid askance, the fortune-teller turned away, and hastened towards the front of the mansion, determined to linger within the shade of the trees until one or other of the young ladies should venture on the lawn.

The good fortune that had been with her hitherto did not desert her now, for she had scarcely gained the desired shade when her keen eyes detected, at some distance down the avenue, a lithe, grey-robed figure, wrapped about with a fluttering Indian shawl of scarlet and gold.

She recognized the latter at once as belonging to the visitor of the ruins, and with a bold, assured step, she hurried towards her. A brisk walk of some minutes brought her close to the mai'en, who was walking to and fro under the trees, enjoying with rare delight the songs of the birds, the sweetness of the air, the beautiful scenery that lay at the foot of the hill, and her glimpses of the distant sea.

Her face was as calm and as sweet as the starry night. There was no trace of storm in her bright countenance; no gloom in her dark, passionate eyes; no sadness in the expression of her delicate mouth. She seemed very happy and content, and there was an appearance of purity about her which impressed even the disguised woman who was approaching her with a heart filled with jealousy and hatred.

"Oh, this dear old England!" the pre-

tended gipsy heard her murmur, in tones quivering with feeling. "I have dreamed of it all my life, but I never imagined half its quiet beauty and loveliness."

Her eyes roamed over the beautiful scene, dwelling upon vine-draped cottages, shining brooks, green fields, emerald meadows, the distant ruins at Sea View, looking hoary with age, and, beyond all, the great bright sea.

It was not to be wondered at that the heart of the maiden was touched by the sight of a peaceful beauty of which she had all her life dreamed, and which she saw now with eyes used only to wilder scenes beneath a tropical sky.

Absorbed in contemplation, she did not observe her enemy's approach, until she was suddenly startled by a footfall at her side.

Looking up quickly, her gaze rested upon the pretended gipsy.

She regarded her a moment as if she had been a feature of the scenery, and then would have turned away, but that her enemy detained her by a gesture, saying—

"Pretty lady, shall I tell your fortune? Would you know to what end you have crossed the wide sea? Cross the gipsy's hand with silver and the future shall be made plain to you."

"I do not believe in fortune-telling," replied Hellice, simply. "I do not wish to know my future, but there is money for you," and she drew from her tiny embroidered purse a silver coin, and tendered it to the woman.

The fortune-teller took it and came still nearer.

"I am no impostor, gentle lady," she asserted. "You need not believe what I shall tell you, but listen to me, I entreat you."

Hellice hesitated, then complied with the woman's importunities with a smile.

As she had said, she was entirely destitute of faith in the power of any person to read the future better than another, but she was willing to be amused and to become acquainted with the manners of the English gipsy, she having encountered many of the nomadic race in her native country.

She extended her small, slender hand, with its tapering fingers, and her enemy clasped it with something like fierceness, and pretended to read the delicate lines crossing the pink palm.

"You were born in a distant country," said Margaret Sorel, speaking with assumed gentleness, yet feeling a desire to crush that pretty hand with her own larger and stronger one. "You are but partly of English descent. One of your parents was a native Hindoo, and you have inherited many of her traits."

Hellice half snatched away her hand, a quick flush mounted to her cheeks, and she would have uttered an exclamation but for the remembrance that it was only a gipsy who was speaking.

It was evident that she did not feel flattered at the communication she had received, but a scornful smile curved her lips at her own momentary folly in resenting it.

"Well, go on!" she said, quietly.

"You do not like me to say that you are part Hindoo," declared the fortune-teller, eyeing her keenly. "Have you deemed otherwise?"

Hellice grew pale, but her voice and manner were full of haughtiness as she responded,—

"How can it matter to a stranger what I may have thought? I will go in—"

"Pardon the poor gipsy, gentle lady. I meant not to offend. Shall I talk to you of love? I read in your face that you are just learning the sweet lesson, but I bid you beware. The man you love is not free to wed. Be warned in time and avoid him, or a dreadful doom will be yours!"

Hellice withdrew her hand from the woman's grasp, half alarmed at her menacing tone and the fierce glitter of her eyes.

"I repeat it—he is not free to wed!" cried the divorced wife, vehemently. "A marriage between you and him can never take place."

Be cold to him, avoid him, hate him—do anything but love him and smile upon him. In a love for him lies your life-long misery and desolation!"

Hellice retreated a step, impressed with the idea that the woman before her was a lunatic.

The sweet feelings at her heart, the existence of which she had not suspected, were shocked into premature being.

She was deathly pale, her eyes glowed with a strange kind of luminousness, and her heart throbbed.

At this juncture the ring of horses' hoofs was heard in the avenue almost at hand. The pretended gipsy and her intended victim had been too much absorbed to hear the closing of the gates, and this sound was their first intimation of an approach.

Hellice looked up, uttered a joyful exclamation, and sprang towards the foremost rider, who checked his steed at sight of her and leaped to the ground.

As may be guessed, the rider was Sir Richard Haughton.

His proud, calm face became radiant at sight of the East Indian girl, and his eyes beamed with a strangely tender expression as he marked that her attitude was that of one desiring protection. As for Hellice, her countenance was irradiated by a lovely bloom, and her expression of alarm changed to one of security.

Both, after a glance at each other, in which soul spoke to soul, turned their gaze upon the fortune-teller.

Strong in the belief that her disguise would defy even the penetration of her former husband, the divorced wife stood her ground. With a quick movement she drew forward her flowing locks to shade her face, and then folded her hands upon her breast. She did not look up openly, but watched Sir Richard with a furtive, stealthy gaze.

"I fancied you were alarmed, Miss Glinwick?" said Sir Richard, somewhat puzzled.

"I believe I was foolishly so," replied Hellice, blushing. "I am not used to English gipsies, and this one frightened me. I dare say the poor woman would not willingly have alarmed me."

"But what could she have said to frighten you, Miss Glinwick?" inquired the young Baronet. "Was she attempting to extort money?"

Hellice replied in the negative, and looked so embarrassed and confused that Sir Richard's keen perception warned him that he had been the subject of the gipsy's remarks. He looked again at the latter, then his face darkened and his brows grew stern.

He had recognised his divorced wife, notwithstanding her disguise.

For a moment he was chilled to the heart with apprehension as to what she might have said. Perhaps she had declared herself his wife—perhaps had told the story of their marriage with untruthful colouring—perhaps she had represented him as unfaithful, and herself as a wronged yet loving wife. A cold perspiration broke out upon his pale forehead, and in that moment of anguish he knew that he loved Hellice Glinwick already as he had never loved before and as he would never cease to love—with all the ardour of a proud, strong nature and a passionate soul.

He looked at Hellice for confirmation of his suspicion, almost expecting to find her gaze intentionally averted; but her clear, truthful eyes, like walls of burning sunshine, met his as frankly as before, and her cheeks glowed faintly like a lamp shining through a thin porcelain shade.

There was no aversion, no contempt, no suspicion in her glance, and at once his heart grew light under the conviction that he had come in time to interrupt a communication that might have been fatal to his hopes.

"You must not heed the idle words of a wandering gipsy, Miss Glinwick," he said, in his usual tones, as the maiden remained silent. "The gipsy's trade is to obtain money by working on the fears of the young and

startling, but I am sure you have no faith in her random guesses!"

"None whatever!" declared Hellice, smiling. "It was not what she said, but her manner that startled me."

At this moment Mr. William Haughton, who had remained in the background, gazing at the young girl in speechless admiration, approached his nephew and plucked his coat-tails, demanding in an audible whisper an introduction to Miss Glinwick.

Sir Richard complied with the request, and Hellice acknowledged her new acquaintance by a bow and a smile that transported him to the seventh heaven of delight. He quitted his horse, stationed himself at her side, and began to lavish compliments upon her that seemed to her irresistibly amusing.

"I fancied your name was Miss Avon," he said, "but 'what's in a name?' A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Permit me to congratulate you upon your restoration to your charming mother. Lady Redwoode is one of my few and chosen friends. Her lovely person enshrouses a lovely soul!"

"Lady Redwoode is indeed lovely," replied Hellice, sadly and abstractedly. "But you are mistaken in my relationship to her, Mr. Haughton. I should have been happy beyond all power of expression to have been claimed as her child, but that happiness was reserved for another."

Mr. Haughton looked at her with a vague expression, not comprehending her; but, suddenly concluding that "it was all right," his brow cleared and he proceeded to inquire how she liked the land of her ancestors.

Hellice replied with the enthusiasm peculiar to her character, and while she was so engaged Sir Richard moved towards the pretended gipsy, who maintained her position, feeling secure in her disguise, in order to watch the intercourse of the man she loved with the woman she now hated.

She was watching Hellice with an angry, envious look when the young Baronet whispered at her ear,—

"I know you, Margaret Sorel! Wretched woman, how dare you pollute the ears of this pure and innocent girl with your foul tongue? Away, if you would not be committed to gaol as a trespasser and a vagrant!"

The divorced wife reeled as if she had been struck.

"Richard!" she gasped.

He answered only by the one word,—

"Go!"

"Richard!" she said again, in a fierce, agonized whisper, looking at him imploringly, "what is this girl to you? You have mourned me all these years, and now a childish creature like that has come between us! I cannot bear it, I will not bear it! Forgive me and take me back, or cast me off at your peril. I tell you I am no meek, pining girl to sit down and weep for your loss, but a bitter, resolute woman able to avenge herself upon you and upon her!" and she pointed towards the unconscious Hellice.

The young Baronet replied only by pointing towards the lodge gate.

The divorced wife breathed hard and pressed her hands upon her heart to still its frenzied throbbings.

"You order me from your presence as unfit to speak to her," she said, in the same low, intense tone. "Take heed, Richard Haughton, lest I keep my vow and rob you of her in the moment you think to call her your own. No woman but I shall ever be your wife. Since you reject my love, bear the burden of my hate! I will have revenge—revenge on you and on her!"

With a wild, strange, eldritch laugh that chilled the blood of those who heard it, and with a menacing look at her former husband, so dark and deadly in its import that he involuntarily shuddered, Margaret Sorel dashed away through the shadows of the trees, her scarlet cloak floating out behind her like a blood-dyed banner.

Sir Richard became slightly pale, but, as

calm and quiet as ever, joined Hellice, who had turned round at the sound of that weird laughter, and smiled reassuringly.

"This was an unpleasant encounter for you, Miss Glinwick," he said, quietly, "but I do not think that woman will dare molest you again!"

"I think she is crazy," remarked Mr. Haughton, whose theory it was that every person was a lunatic whose actions were at all singular, but who, strangely enough, never classed himself among the mentally afflicted. "Do not be alarmed, Miss Glinwick. I will protect you," and he smiled benignantly upon her.

Hellice thanked him, and a gardener coming up, she herself was delivered into his guardianship while the trio advanced slowly towards the mansion. Sir Richard walked close beside the maiden, his heart burning with the sweet and generous passion of youth, and his fair face glowing with a sweet, ineffable tenderness, as he bent towards Hellice, and the young East Indian walked shyly beside him, her dark loveliness made glorious by the sweet and tender thoughts that brooded at her heart. Neither spoke much, being wrapped in vague, delicious reveries over the discovery which Margaret Sorel had forced upon both that their hearts were no longer without an object about which to entwine the fairest hopes and upon which to lavish a wealth of affection.

But while Hellice's discovery was but half acknowledged to herself, as became a shy and modest maiden, Sir Richard's contributed to strengthen the great purpose he had formed of winning and winning her to be all his own.

CHAPTER XII.

What wit so sharp is found in age or youth
That can distinguish truth from treachery?
Falseness puts on the face of simple truth,
And masks 't' th' habit of plain honesty,
When she in heart intends most villainy.
—*Mirror for Magistrates.*

Cecile raised herself upon her arm and looked intently into the face of her ayah as the latter bent towards her, without changing her kneeling position. That face, brown and ruddy in its Asiatic beauty, was instinct with a deadly meaning. The small black eyes glittered like those of a serpent, and there was a cruel smile on her lips—a smile utterly devoid of mirth, but full of a strange and subtle wickedness that would have made any other than Cecile recoil in fear and aversion.

But the chosen heiress of Redwoode regarded her attendant with a pleased and trusting look, and took between her white fingers her brown hand and caressed it as a child might have played with a sleeping tigress.

"Dear Bamee," she murmured softly "you would do anything for me, would you not?"

"Anything, my sweet!" cried the Hindoo, with impetuosity, kissing fiercely the maiden's hand. "No lover can be truer to his mistress than I to thee, blue-eyed daughter of the sun. Command me, Cecile, and I will obey. Shall the lady of Redwoode fade away and leave you heiress of all her possessions?" and her voice was low and terrible, and her eyes glittered with a deadlier light. "Shall Hellice be swept from your path like an autumn leaf before the wind? Speak, command, my darling, that I may prove to you my love and fidelity."

Cecile's mouth, that seemed formed for tender utterances, reflected the wicked smile of the Hindoo. Her blue eyes which her fond mother had compared to dewy violets, grew hard and triumphant in expression, and the character of her countenance changed to one that was utterly revolting. It seemed as though her mask of loveliness had fallen aside and revealed a hideously deformed soul. She continued to play with the ayah's hand, as if she exulted in her complete supremacy over

that perverted nature, and as one who plays with a leashed bloodhound.

"I see I could not ask too much of you, Renee," she said absently.

"Try me and see," returned the ayah.

"You have never asked anything of me in vain as yet. Your life has been a bed of roses, my sweet. No one has ever dared to frown upon you or speak harshly to you. People have fawned upon you from your birth."

"All but Hellice," said Cecile, discontentedly.

"All but Hellice," repeated the Hindoo, compressing her lips. "Your cousin has always been strange and peculiar. She would not tell a falsehood to save her life, I do believe," and her tone grew contemptuous. "She would be a saint, I suppose. Is it of her you would speak, Cecile? Do you fear her?"

"Yes, I fear her—that is the word!" cried Cecile. "Oh, Renee, you have not noticed as I have done that Lady Redwoode is undecided and wavering between Hellice and me. She wants to make us co-heiresses, and I smiled and acceded to the wish when my heart was full of bitterness and anger. And when my head has lain on her bosom, Renee, and I have looked up into her face, it has worn an absent, anxious expression, and I knew she was thinking of Hellice. This very morning, at the breakfast table, I uttered some idle, pretty compliments to mamma; she smiled and thanked me, and then turned her eyes upon Hellice, who sat silent and thoughtful, and I fancied my mother's gaze was one of anxious questioning."

"Perhaps it was," said the ayah, moodily.

"But it must not be so," exclaimed Cecile, in alarm. "What if she were to adopt Hellice as her daughter? What if she were to settle her private fortune upon her? What if, indeed, she were to take her in my place? I tell you, Renee, that Hellice with her proud silence and grave demeanour is making an impression upon Lady Redwoode's heart which I may not be able to efface. This must not go on. You must help me, Renee."

"How?" questioned the Hindoo, in the soft accents of her native tongue.

"I know not how," answered Cecile, in the same language. "But one end is to be obtained. Lady Redwoode must be induced to look coldly upon Hellice. She must despise and dislike her. She must give her a home only from a sense of duty. Can you bring this about?"

"I have not the Baroness's ear in which to whisper things against Hellice," replied the ayah, thoughtfully. "It is for you to poison the mind of Lady Redwoode against your cousin. Your heart has not grown weak, has it, my pet? nor is your skill in making people believe incredible things lost."

"I hope not, but I do not wish to betray myself as Hellice's enemy. Yet I will use all my influence with mamma against Hellice. Oh, Renee, I wish I had my cousin's beauty instead of this pink and white prettiness of mine. Lady Redwoode said this morning that Hellice was far more beautiful than I. It has always been so. Strangers always prefer her to me, and I must remain in the background as a foil to her beauty. I will not submit to a position second to my cousin's in any respect."

"Nor need you," said the ayah. "If insinuations and falsehoods fail to rid you of Hellice, there remains another resource."

"And that?" questioned Cecile, her face paling.

The Hindoo touched her breast significantly.

Cecile cast a fearful glance around her, and then looked eagerly into the brown face, whose expression had grown even more terrible in its wicked meaning, and whispered in the ayah's native tongue,—

"You mean that box of powders and waters? You have it safe, Renee? Show it me!"

The Hindoo loosened from beneath the neck

of her dress a heavy gold chain of considerable length. At its extremity, cleverly concealed beneath her ample bodice, was a small, curiously wrought box of gold, remarkable for its elaborate workmanship and for the four small but liquid rubies set in its corners. A tiny gold key depended also from the chain, and with its aid Renee unlocked the shining box. She then raised the lid.

Its contents consisted simply of half-a-dozen crystal phials, fitted with glass stoppers under close-fitting caps of chased gold. The tiny phials were filled, three with clear and colourless liquids, as limpid as water, and the remaining three with powders, the contents of two being as white as freshly gathered snow, and the third of a deep sea-green hue, resembling a powdered emerald.

"Are they not beautiful?" asked Renee, in a tone of ardent admiration, as she held up alternately the phials to the light. "This is a perfume, Cecile, that soothes the inhaler to a delicious sleep from which there is no awakening. The flowers from which it was distilled at midnight, when the moon was at the full, grow in sank marshes in India, guarded by venomous serpents. This," and she exhibited the next, "grew in a serpent's fangs; and this," taking up a third, "produces a wasting away that cannot be told from consumption. But I need not explain their separate properties to you. When you have need of me you have but to speak."

"I may have need of those things sooner than you dream," said Cecile, gloomily, yet not without a shudder, as she looked upon the dangerous weapons at her control. "I will wait till other means fail. Put them away, Renee. I only desired to know that they were safe."

The Hindoo obeyed, concealing her deadly treasure in her bosom, and fastening above it her small red shawl, while Cecile sank back upon her pillow and regarded her hands complacently, holding them up as the ayah had displayed the phials.

"You would not think, Renee," she said, "that those fingers of mine could administer a potion from those phials to any human being, but you do not know me yet. When things go on smoothly I am as bright and pleasant as sunshine and would bestow gifts upon those I like; but when I hate anybody I cannot be happy until they are out of my way."

"There is no need that you should be troubled by the presence of one you dislike, my pet."

"I have thought out a new programme for you, Renee," declared Cecile, musingly. "Your constant attendance upon me keeps alive Lady Redwoode's suspicions. You must leave me more to myself and attend more upon my cousin. You must profess more love for Hellice; you must find opportunities to intercede for her with mamma; you must extol her beauty, and declare that she is wise in the knowledge of poisons; that—in short—she has all the subtlety and superstition that characterize you."

"But every minute spent away from you will be heavy and sorrow-laden," objected the Asiatic.

"You have promised to obey me implicitly," said Cecile, impatiently. "Do as I say without any questioning. You must also be a spy upon Hellice. Tell me all she does and says, how she regards mamma's choice, and what her feelings are towards me. I believe I have nothing more to say, and will sleep now."

She raised her head indolently and bestowed a kiss upon the ayah, who returned it with interest. Cecile then gathered up her form into a comfortable position, nestled her head upon her pillows, and closed her eyes as if in slumber. Renee drew over her a shawl and maintained her humble position, watching her young mistress with a strange and loving devotion.

The siesta was of considerable duration, but the ayah never for one moment relaxed her vigilance, employing herself in fanning

the sleeping maiden, in regarding her innocent-seeming countenance, and in crooning low Hindoo melodies that were as sweet as silver chimes. When Cecile awakened those low musical murmurs were the first sounds that greeted her ears, as had been the case from her infancy. She unclosed her eyes with her usual languid indolence, and inquired the hour.

"Two o'clock, my pet," was the prompt reply, as the ayah glanced at the pretty clock on the mantel-piece. "You have slept past the luncheon hour, but Lady Redwoode has just sent you some refreshments."

She arose and with her swift, almost noiseless movements wheeled towards the couch a small inlaid table, depressed its top until it was almost level with the couch, and then brought and placed upon it a heavy silver tray, laden with a small and exquisitely beautiful silver *à-la-tête* service. The little coffee-urn was sending forth a cloud of fragrant steam; the white, crisp rolls were yet warm, and the delicate broiled bird reposed above a hot-water dish that kept it warm while preserving its juices. With nimble fingers Renee filled a Sevres cup with coffee, and served it to Cecile without cream or sugar, after the Arab fashion.

The maiden sipped her coffee indolently and trifled with her food, chattering away as merrily as an innocent child might have done. When she had finished, and the table had been removed, she commanded her wardrobe to be displayed before her, and amused herself in selecting the dress in which she appeared to best advantage.

"I must pay attention to even the smallest trifles, Renee," she said, when her choice had been made. "I am determined that to-day mamma shall change her opinion concerning my inferiority to Hellice."

"And that Mr. Forzythe shall admire you, my pet?"

"Don't speak of him!" exclaimed Cecile, her brows contracting. "He is bitten with the prevailing madness of admiration for Hellice. He talked about her this morning—until I was tired of hearing her name, yet he is paying court to me, and mamma wishes me to marry him. Well, we shall see what will be!"

"The heiress of Redwoode can marry whom she likes," said the ayah, as she loosened Cecile's hair and let it fall around her shoulders like a mantle of gold.

"We won't talk of my marriage at present," said the maiden, frowning. "I may have views myself of which I have not spoken. There was one in India—but we won't speak of him now," she added, sighing. "Hasten, Renee, and let me go downstairs. Perhaps at this moment Hellice is undermining me in the esteem of Lady—mamma."

Renee complied with the commands of her young mistress in silence. She gathered the glittering hair into a shining coil, and adorned it with a spray of melting turquoise gems. She brought a robe of lustrous fabric of the palest azure blue, shot with silver, put it upon Cecile, and completed the toilet with a flowing sash, a white lace jacket, and the turquoise jewels which had been the gift of Lady Redwoode.

"Your dress is perfect, my pet!" said the Hindoo, admiringly. "No one will prefer Hellice to you to-day. Look out of the window. Your cousin is coming up the walk with two gentlemen, and you can see for yourself that she cannot compare with you."

Cecile obeyed, looking out through the lace curtains, and beheld Hellice slowly approaching the dwelling, shy and silent, attended by Sir Richard Houghton and his uncle.

"Her dress is inferior to mine," she said, complacently. "I wonder who that tall, fair gentleman, the younger of the two, is. He is very handsome, Renee. He seems strangely devoted to Hellice for a perfect stranger, does he not?"

The ayah assented, and Cecile watched the little group until they had disappeared in the

shadow of the mansion. Then, after a last glance at her toilet, she arose and made her way downstairs. She paused a moment at the door of the drawing-room, not to collect her self-possession, for she rarely lost that, but to see that the train of her robe was in proper position, and that its adornments were were fully exhibited.

She was not troubled with the timidity usual to young girls, and she was delighted with the opportunity of creating a sensation. Opening the door, therefore, at the moment when a servant stepped forward to perform the office, she swept into the magnificent drawing-room with a stateliness and dignity which a duchess might have envied.

Lady Redwoode was seated near the centre of the apartment, surrounded by a pleasant group, of which Hellice was the prominent member. The latter, her face all brightness and sparkle, was speaking at the moment of her cousin's entrance, and those around her were listening to her words as though they had been charmed utterances. At sight of Cecile the Baroness arose and came forward to meet her, drawing her daughter's arm through her own.

"Cecile," she said, "these gentlemen are my near neighbours and friends who have called to welcome you and your cousin home. Permit me to introduce Sir Richard Haughton, and his uncle, Mr. Haughton. Gentlemen, this is Miss Avon, my daughter by my first marriage."

Cecile inclined her head in response to the salutations and congratulations of Lady Redwoode's friends, and sank indolently into an arm-chair which Mr. Andrew Forsythe placed for her use.

"This young lady is your daughter, then, Lady Redwoode?" exclaimed Mr. William Haughton, with a puzzled countenance. "Why, I thought the other one was your child. I am sure she looks most like you!"

"You think that my niece resembles me, Mr. Haughton?"

"Much more than her cousin. I noticed it when I first saw her."

"But Hellice is dark and I am fair," said her ladyship, smiling. "Our features are totally unlike."

"True, but the expression is very like," said Mr. Haughton, looking from Hellice to the Baroness. There is a strong resemblance, but I cannot tell in what it consists. I think—" he added, and then paused abruptly, half frightened by the dark frown which Cecile bestowed upon him.

It instantly disappeared, leaving the fair face without a flaw, but the impression of that look never faded from the mind of the poor gentleman, who conceived an instant aversion to the blonde beauty which all her arts could not efface. He did not dare finish his sentence, but the Baroness, all unconscious of the uncertainty attending the identity of Lady Redwoode's daughter, came to his uncle's rescue.

"I, too, have noticed the resemblance," he said. "It is too subtle for analysis, but it is very plain."

"Do you notice it also, Mr. Kenneth?" asked the Baroness, in what appeared to Sir Richard an incomprehensible state of agitation.

Her ladyship's adviser glanced at the blushing Hellice, and replied in the affirmative, adding that it was singular that he had not noticed it before.

"It struck me at first," observed Mr. Andrew Forsythe, but I ascribed it to a family resemblance, Miss Glintwick being Lady Redwoode's niece."

This remark sufficed to explain the resemblance, and no one thought farther of the matter, unless it might be the Baroness, who became grave and thoughtful, and watched the rival maidens with anxious glances.

Unconscious of the anger burning in her cousin's heart, Hellice exerted herself to cheer her aunt and entertain their guests, the task seeming to devolve upon her. She talked

modestly, in low, sweet, calm tones that sounded like exquisite music, and her utterances were full of gentle, girlish wisdom, or graceful enthusiasm that charmed and delighted her hearers. Entirely unaware that she had become the cynosure of observation, she conversed with Sir Richard Haughton and Mr. Andrew Forsythe, the colour burning deeply in her cheeks, her eyes shining under her brows like lamps, and her bright, passionate face glowing and sparkling with goodness.

Cecile glanced at the grey robe, relieved only by a knot of scarlet ribbon at the dainty throat, and by the Indian shawl which Hellice still wore, and then at her own costly costume, and her heart overflowed with bitterness, and she could have torn her silken robe to shreds because it had failed to win her the admiration and observation which Hellice so unconsciously won without an effort.

"Let her triumph now," she thought in her heart. "It shall not be for long."

This resolve comforted her, and she resumed her self-possession, painfully conscious that her constrained silence had not been unnoticed by Lady Redwoode and by Mr. Andrew Forsythe, and that the keen-eyed Mr. Kenneth had stolen frequent glances at her face.

The conversation drifted from the ordinary topics of the day to a discussion of life in India, and the manners and customs of the transplanted English. Hellice described the habits and amusements of the Anglo Indians, and frequently endeavoured to draw her cousin into the discussion, but Cecile maintained a haughty reserve and said little, except in monosyllables. Once or twice her lip curled when Hellice had given some apt description that was particularly pleasing, but in no other way was her envy apparent.

(To be continued.)

BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.

—O—

CHAPTER XIV.

THE shaded lamp throws weird and fantastic shadows in the sick room; long rays of light branch out across the ceiling, and move to-and-fro.

The shadows of two figures are thrown out in strong relief upon the ceiling—two heads can be seen bent together. The room is in absolute silence; Mrs. Rea is asleep, and the trampling of the surf upon the beach is the only sound that can be heard, except the deep, laboured breathing of the patient.

The two dark shadows waver and move, bending and lengthening. From between the drawn curtains of the bed they do not see two eager eyes peering with a tense, terrified expression. Mrs. Rea has raised herself a little, and is watching, with glaring eyes, Dr. Smith dropping something into a wine-glass.

She can only see his back, but the light falls full on Margaret's face, as she stands holding the wine-glass, which trembles visibly in her grasp, and Margaret's face is white with excitement and fear.

"Take care you don't drink it yourself, Margaret," Dr. Smith whispers, softly, but soft as the words are they reach those intent ears that are strained to hear, and she sees him pass his hand across his forehead in a dazed, nervous sort of way as he speaks.

"No fear of that," Margaret rejoins, equally softly.

And when they both, with one accord, glance in between the curtains, the patient is, to all intents and purposes, still calmly sleeping the heavy sleep of exhaustion.

"You will carry out my orders, Margaret," he says, in his ordinary tone, lowered, of course, on account of the weak state of Mrs. Rea, and Margaret's lips are white as she answers, "Yes."

His cold look of displeasure steadies her nerves. She follows him to the door.

"You musn't look like that," he whispers, cautiously. "You musn't go about like that, with your teeth chattering! and, above all, take care to tell everyone that I do not think your grandmother can last till morning."

"I will do all you tell me," Margaret answers, fervently, and opening a door in the passage, calls out, "Anne, go in, and sit with your mistress till I come back."

When Anne stolidly enters Mrs. Rea's room, she seats herself at the foot of the bed, and in a minute a weak voice asks,—

"Who is there?"

"It is me, ma'am—Anne," the girl answers.

"Is there anyone else in the room?" anxiously.

"No, ma'am; Miss Margaret has gone down with the doctor."

The glass into which Dr. Smith has put the drops stands at the foot of the bed.

"The wine-glass—give it to me!" Mrs. Rea whispers.

And Anne brings it to the side of the bed, and stands looking down at the drawn, distressed face of her mistress, bearing just now an expression of utter misery and desolation.

"Let me hold it for you, ma'am," urges Anne, guiding the glass to the feeble, palsied grasp, and thinking how very, very much worse the mistress looks to-night. "Oh my, ma'am, you've been and spilt it all! What shall I do now?" cries the girl, as very awkwardly the old lady has let it fall.

"It—doesn't—matter," she says, gasping between each word. "Anne, I have a fancy for a little milk with a spoonful of brandy in it. Get it for me, like a good girl, without Miss Margaret seeing you."

Anne obeys, and gets the brandy and milk; and the news of Dr. Smith's opinion of the mistress having reached the servants' hall, Anne's request is looked upon by them all as a sure sign of the betterness that comes before death.

"That is very good," Mrs. Rea says, feebly, looking at Anne very piteously. "I think, Anne, they kept me too low. Do you think that by-and-by, when Miss Margaret is out of the room, you could get me a little beef tea?"

"Of course, ma'am," Anne says, as if humouring a sick child, and concluding the poor mistress is a little light-headed.

"And now I think I will sleep," the old lady says, with a weary sigh, turning away her face; and Anne goes back to her post at the foot of the bed.

By-and-by Margaret comes back again and dismisses Anne, and resumes her position of head nurse. She looks instinctively for the glass that Dr. Smith had left ready, and her hands turn cold and damp suddenly.

"Has Mrs. Rea taken it? Did Anne give it to her? It was no act of mine then!" thinks Margaret, her heart beating to suffocation.

If she should have taken it? If she were gone already? A guilty tremor shakes her from head to foot; she glances fearfully towards the bed—the heavy, old-fashioned bed—a four-poster, with dark, sombre, crimson curtains.

No sound proceeds from the silent figure lying there. Margaret can hear nothing but the loud beating of her own heart, and the sobbing of the waves upon the shore. In silence she sits, and listens, and waits—for what?

For the time when she will be able to go out through the house and say that old Mrs. Rea has died in her sleep.

There stands the empty wine-glass on the table by the bed where Anne had left it.

Margaret stares at it with a kind of awful fascination. The glass is empty, she must have taken it! And if she has taken it, she must be—

Margaret's eyes, dilated with horror, glance towards the bed again. She cannot bring herself to look yet; her mouth feels parched and dry.

The moaning waves sound like the murmuring voices of a great crowd.

If it should be found out? If it was known? There would be just such a moaning roar of a great crowd in her ears, and yet—

"I did not give it to her," thinks the miserable girl; "no one could say that my hand did it," and still she stares at the empty glass; and the awful night vigil goes on.

It is getting late, it must be nearly twelve o'clock; the tide is at the full, and the great waves break with a hollow, booming sound.

Outside, the pale moonlight floods the earth and sheds a cold radiance over the sea.

Mona stands in her window and watches the waves, and thinks of Rex.

"I love you, dear!" she says, softly, to herself. "Rex, my love!" whispering his name—oh, so tenderly—as she stands lost in happy thought. "And perhaps," she thinks, with a soft smile curving her lips, "perhaps Rex is thinking of me too."

In all probability he is enjoying the comforts of a pipe, sitting with the Reverend John in his study; but surely as his sweet little lady-love thinks of him with the deepest, intensest thought, surely if there is an affinity of souls, his thoughts will fly to her!

And still in the chamber of death sits Margaret, pale and watchful, waiting for the end!

She can bear the uncertainty no longer. Shaking with fear she starts softly towards the bed, afraid and terrified of what she might see; shrinking from the silent, terribly silent, form beneath the bedclothes.

Slowly, slowly, she comes across the room; her knees are aching, so that she can hardly stand. And as she creeps forward her white face reflected in the glass makes her start and almost cry out. She hardly recognises herself with the awful, horrid expression in her eyes!

"If Edward was only here!" she thinks. "Oh! why am I such a coward? Ah!" with a gasp, as she meets the steady gaze of her grandmother's eyes, looking at her from the pillow.

How can she meet these eyes, knowing what she knows? Is it reproach? Is it contempt? What is it she reads in their glance?

"You have had a nice sleep, grand-mamma?"

"Yes; a nice sleep. I am better," says the old lady.

Margaret makes the plunge boldly, but her voice is tremulous.

"Did Anne give you your medicine, grand-mamma—your sleeping draught?"

"I split the glass; it upset," Mrs. Rea answers; and Margaret hardly can know her feelings. What is it—relief or disappointment—in her anxiety not to appear anxious?

"You had a nice sleep without it, grand-mamma," she says, and the words come with difficulty. "I was afraid of disturbing you."

"No doubt! no doubt!"

Mrs. Rea turns away her face.

"Send Martin to me, Margaret," and there is that in her tone that makes Margaret think it is as well not to disobey, so Martin is summoned, and comes to her mistress.

"You have deserted me of late, Martin!" Mrs. Rea says feebly, and Martin answers indignantly.

"I would have come to you if I had been let, ma'am!" casting a defiant glance at Margaret, who makes a mental resolution to pack Martin out of the house the moment the breath leaves her grandmother's body.

"I would like some beef-tea and a spoonful of brandy," Mrs. Rea looks straight at Martin as she speaks. "You get it for me yourself, Martin," and Margaret turns pale and faint.

What does all this mean?

Martin brings the beef-tea in triumph and the brandy, and the old lady takes the nourishment from Martin's hands.

"And now hand me my jewel-case!"

Margaret stares as Martin obeys.

And at her mistress's command unlocks the jewel case, and lifts out tray after tray of jewellery.

Margaret can see the flashing and sparkling of precious stones as Mrs. Rea, with weak, wasted fingers, holds up bracelets and necklaces; they will all be hers soon, and then— Her breath comes fast as she thinks of how Edward will love her when that necklace of diamonds is about her throat!

At the very foot of the box, in the bottom tray of all, lies an old miniature.

Mrs. Rea opens it herself, and gazes long at the face inside.

"Who is it, I wonder?" thinks Margaret, noticing a tear slowly stealing down her grandmother's wasted cheek, and she moves a little nearer the bed.

"Dear grandmamma, Dr. Smith said you were to be kept very quiet. Edward, you know—very, very quiet!" she said.

Mrs. Rea looks at her for a moment, and then motions to Martin to lock away the jewels again—all but the miniature, and that she holds in her hands.

Margaret would give worlds to know what she is thinking about, but dare not ask.

Her mind misgives her when her grandmother speaks next.

"You can leave me, Margaret; Martin will take care of me to-night. Now go!" and Margaret, awed by the strange manner, obeys, and for awhile there is deep silence in the room.

Mrs. Rea speaks at last.

"Martin, fetch Miss Mona."

And Martin, wondering greatly, goes swiftly, and wakes Mona from her first sleep, and presently Mona, in a white dressing-gown, and her long hair in a loose plait hanging down her back, comes softly into the room, and up to the bed.

"Did you want me, grandmamma?"

How changed the old woman is! How worn and haggard is her face! And what a piteous, troubled glance she lifts to the girl's soft, gentle face looking down at her!

She holds out in her trembling grasp the faded miniature.

"Your mother's picture," she whispers.

"You are her very image, child."

Mona opens the case, and sees there a softer likeness of herself, with the same hazel eyes and pretty brown hair.

"My mother!" she says, softly, thinking sadly of the tragic end of that poor young mother.

"Yes, that was my poor Annie, and I want you to keep it."

"Thank you, grandmamma," Mona answers.

"I shall like to have it very much."

Mrs. Rea lies silent for a while, and Mona, filled with a great pity for the loneliness of this woman, dying without one being to care, lays her soft young hand on that old wasted one, and the dim, weary eyes turn to her gratefully.

"You are like her, and, I—I killed my child!"

"You didn't mean to, grandmamma!" Mona whispers, gently. "You would have forgiven my mother if she had lived. It was all a sad, bitter mistake, but it is over now."

The wasted fingers close in a feeble pressure over the young hand.

"If I had only known," she whispers.

"Heaven forgive me, I was a hard, wicked woman, and I hated you, child, because the very sight of you was a reproach to me. Whenever I looked at your face I seemed to see Annie, and I cannot rest. I have never rested since. By night and day I hear her voice, calling—calling. I have fought against it, struggled against it, but she is always there, and you look at me with her eyes, and how shall I meet her in Heaven? What shall I tell her about her child?"

Mona can hardly hear the hoarse, whispering voice, but she bends down suddenly, with this great pity and sorrow filling her heart, and lays her warm young lips on her grandmother's forehead.

"Tell her, grandmamma, that her child forgave you."

All night long has Mona sat by Mrs. Rea's

bed, all the long weary hours watching patiently. And no sleep has come to her soft bright eyes, her hand still lies in her grandmother's clasp—Martin slumbers peacefully in the arm chair.

And beyond the closed shutters a new day has come to life, and the bright, pure light of early morning sweeps away the rolling clouds, and bright and fresh, and altogether lovely, shines the glorious light over land and sea.

The light filtering through the shutters shines on the weary face of the sick woman, and touches Mona's white draperies, as she sits motionless.

And then Mrs. Rea wakes from her restless sleep, and looks full at Mona.

"Is Martin there?"

"Yes, grandmamma."

And Martin, hearing her name, comes forward rubbing her eyes.

"Will you please go away for a little while, Martin? I have something to say to Miss Mona."

When she has gone, Mrs. Rea raises herself a little, and she looks very wretched in the clear morning light.

"Promise me," she says, quickly, "not to leave me alone with Margaret. She tried to poison me!"

"Oh, grandmamma; no!" cries Mona, in a shocked voice, and thinking her grandmother is surely raving.

"I am not mistaken. I know it, I heard her! Oh! she might have let me die when Heaven should call me. I did not expect that of Margaret, and I had left her everything. She knew it, and then to poison me!" "I will stay with you, of course, grand-mamma. I would have come before, but Margaret said you did not wish for me!"

A look of deep anger passes over Mrs. Rea's face.

"It was a plot," she says. "A plot laid by that Dr. Smith. Mona, child, see that either you or Martin stay with me till the end."

"I will, grandmamma," promises Mona, thinking that the poor feeble mind is wandering.

"You mustn't say anything, Mona, but stay with me. They mustn't suspect we know anything. I am only a feeble, dying old woman, and they could easily put me out of the way. Now call Martin, and I will tell her she is not to leave my room again!"

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Dr. Smith drives over to Lonesome Lodge in the goodly early morning sunshine his mind is full of various thoughts. He looks pale to day, and as if he had not slept last night.

"I suppose it will be over," he thinks. "I shall be greeted with the news that the old lady is gone. Then there will be the funeral and the reading of the will. And then the next event will be the wedding, and I shall be the happy possessor of my Margaret and the forty thousand pounds!"

He turns in at the gates of Lonesome Lodge and starts as he looks at the windows. He had expected the blinds would be all down, and lo! the windows are open to the morning air. Margaret muddled it, he thinks savagely.

Margaret meets him in the hall, and their eyes meet. She is pale and agitated, and looks as if she had been crying.

"Come into the dining-room," she whispers, and when he has followed her she shuts the door carefully, and coming close to him, whispers the story of last night.

"And so she never took it!" he says blankly, a grey shade coming over his face. "Did she suspect, Margaret?"

"I cannot tell. Only she sent for Mona, and she and Martin have mounted guard, and now Mona has been sent off in the brougham for that clergyman, Mr. Challoner, to come at once, and Martin is with grandmamma."

The expression of Dr. Edward Smith's face is not pleasant to see.

"I wish to Heaven we had let it alone," he mutters savagely. "You are a perfect fool, Margaret, and the whole thing is your fault. I might have known you would have made a mess of it."

Margaret bears his rebuke in silence; but her face looks worried and anxious.

"You will see her as usual, Edward?"

"I suppose so. You are sure she hasn't sent for a lawyer or anyone of that sort?"

"No, nobody!"

"Well, see that she doesn't. We must be careful now and humour her. You and I understand each other pretty well, Margaret. We are in the same boat, remember. I want the forty thousand pounds, and you want me. We are of one mind about that."

"Yes," falters Margaret, who is afraid of her Edward when he is like this.

They hold a long consultation, which results in Dr. Smith paying his usual professional visit, after which he is greatly cheered, for Mrs. Rex is evidently much worse, and her manner being in no way different to himself he concludes that all Margaret's suspicions are mere fancies. Up to the present there does not seem to be any probability of Mrs. Rex altering her will at the last moment.

"She is sinking fast," he whispers to Margaret as he takes his departure. "I asked her would she like to see the other doctor again, but she said it didn't matter, it would soon be all over. I wish to Heaven it was all over," he adds with emphasis. "Good-bye, Margaret; I will call over again in the afternoon."

And in the afternoon Mrs. Rex is apparently worse; the weakness has increased alarmingly. But she seems quite at rest and at peace in her mind, and lies contentedly, her hand in Mona's.

Margaret tells Dr. Smith of the visit paid by Mr. Challoner the clergyman.

"He was there for an hour!" she said. "I waited downstairs till he left, and then went up to grandmother again."

"And what did she say?"

"Nothing! Only that she was at peace."

Dr. Smith passes his hand through his hair.

"I don't think she can last till morning. I wish it was all over, Margaret!"

"So do I. Oh, Edward! I am half afraid sometimes that grandmother knows that she must have seen or heard," whispering in a low, frightened voice.

"What a fool you are, Margaret! It is only a whim she has taken about that girl, Mona! The old woman's mind is wandering a bit, I fancy."

Dr. Smith stays all day at Lonesome Lodge, hovering about, waiting for the end, and spending the time not unpleasantly in taking mental notes of all the possessions that must be his before very long.

Late in the evening, when the twilight is growing shadowy, Mona steals out to have one brief, delightful quarter-of-an-hour with Rex.

At the gate he meets her, and they wander down to the sea together and enjoy the heaven of each other's society.

Dr. Smith sees them as they pass down towards the shore, and his face grows very black, and his heart beats fast with a great maddening jealousy. He would like to see Mona stricken down with some great trouble. He cannot bear that she should be happy with the man she loves.

In the shadow of the stunted pines he watches, till the two figures come back again; and, in the soft hush of the summer darkness he sees Rex Challoner take Mona into the shelter of his arms to say "Good-night!"

He can just hear the man's deep, whispered words. He can fancy the rapture of that embrace, the happiness of that kiss! The blood seems to rush, ringing to his brain. He sees only the woman he loves in the arms of another man; passive, happy, in his clasp. He hears the girl's soft, sweet "Good-night, Rex!"

And then she comes flitting up in the shadowy gloom alone.

And once again the man's fond, tender tones echo back, "Good-night!"

Mona starts, as from out of the darkness comes Dr. Smith suddenly and instinctively. She hurries forward, but he keeps pace with her flying steps. She is afraid of him! and why does he not speak? Why does he walk beside her like this?

They have reached the door together.

Mona turns and looks up at him, and draws back in terror at the awful look in his face. Even in the gloom she can see his extreme pallor, and his eyes like two burning coals. He stretches out one hand to grasp hers.

"You shall never be his!" his voice cries in a choking whisper, "I swear."

And then the door from within is burst wide open, and Margaret's voice cries out,—

"Edward, Edward! Quick, grandmother is dying."

In the flood of light from the hall she has just caught sight of her Edward, his hand in Mona's; and she turns with a gasping sob on Mona.

"You shan't triumph long; grandmother is dying!"

And Mona darts past her into the house, and upstairs Martin is heard calling out loudly,—

"Miss Mona! Miss Mona! come to the mistress."

It is all over, with her eyes on Mona's face, and her voice whispering the name of Mona's mother. Mrs. Rex has died!—suddenly and unexpectedly, as people do die at times when the end really comes.

"Annie, my child, forgive!" she had whispered.

"Our trespasses, have mercy," and Mona had laid her wet cheek on the dying hand, and softly prayed, too, for that forgiveness and peace that is not of this world.

And the end has come!

Dr. Smith has driven himself home, after one brief congratulation from Margaret, who, in a burst of hysterical weeping, had clung to him; and even before the last sigh had well left Mrs. Rex's lips, had laid herself, Lonesome Lodge, and the forty thousand pounds at his feet!

"Nothing can come between us now!" she had cried, rapturously, going to the door to see him off, just as the first flash of dawn swept up over the sky, and the heavy mountain was turned to rosy red.

And she had died naturally, after all!

Dr. Smith's great discovery had in no way hurried on the end.

"It was lucky she didn't live another twenty-four hours!" he thinks, as he drives home in the sweet, mysterious dawn, "or I think my sweet Margaret would have found herself in a very different position!"

"And now leave my house! now, this instant!"

Margaret speaks with a sort of furious determination. She cannot forget Dr. Smith's treachery; and, womanlike, her vengeance falls on Mona.

She still sees him as she saw him last night, with his hand on Mona's, and his face white with a passion of feeling it had never shown for her!

Mrs. Rex is not two hours dead, but Margaret has taken the control of everything into her own hands.

Already the jewel-case and its contents are in her own safe keeping!

The world is full of the early morning sunshine. It is not yet six o'clock. The shutters are shut yet, in all but the room upstairs, where they are laying out the dead.

Margaret, haggard and wide-eyed, with a reckless excitement in her face, glares at Mona.

Her hear has come; she can revenge the faithlessness of her lover now.

"Leave my house!" she cries, and Mona looks at her a little alarmed.

"Not now! this moment, Margaret! Surely you don't mean me to go now?"

"Yes, now! this instant! I hate the very sight of you! and you must go!"

"May I not wait a few hours?" pleads Mona, looking weary and tired, and the tears gather in her eyes.

"No! not an hour!" Margaret retorts, being that most unpleasant of unpleasant beings to deal with—a woman whose vanity has been wounded. "This is my house, and I am mistress here; and I won't allow you to stay here any longer—so go!"

Mona leaves the room in silence; and Margaret, with her own hands, draws back the curtains and unbars the shutters, and into the dark room pours a flood of sunlight.

But Margaret looks not on the beauty of the morning. She has no eyes for the turquoise sea or the sun-flashed sky; her mind is in a tumult of passion.

She sees nothing before her but Edward's face as he had looked at Mona last night. And she thinks now, with a feeling of exultation, that she will make Mona suffer as much as lies in her power!

"Margaret, am I to go? Do you really mean it?"

Mona stands at the open doorway in her ulster and hat. Slight and slender she stands, with grave eyes and tremulous mouth.

It is never a pleasant thing being turned out of a house. Even with Nellie Challoner to go to, Mona would rather stay a little longer. It seems strange to go, with her grandmother lying dead upstairs!

"I said you were to go!" Margaret says, sullenly. "I never want to see you or speak to you again!"

One second's silence, and then Mona goes.

It is breakfast time at the Rectory; the pleasant odour of coffee and fried bacon pervades the air. The children are grouped around. The Reverend John divides his attention between his breakfast and his letters. Nellie devotes herself to supplying the children's wants; and Rex calmly proceeds with his breakfast with the air of a man at peace with himself and the world, when the door opens and discloses Mona, standing pale and weary-looking on the threshold. Rex is by her side in an instant.

"Mona, what is it?" His eyes have detected the trouble and distress in her face. Tears are struggling for the mastery. At sight of Rex's face and at sound of his voice she nearly breaks down. Nellie has her by the hand and draws her forward.

"Is your grandmother—" she begins, and Mona answers, in a low voice.

"Yes, she is dead!"

Rex, looking as idiotic as any man desperately in love can look, holds his love's cold hand in both his.

"My own!" he whispers, and fondly imagines that no one hears him but Mona.

Mrs. Challoner, with her usual tact, somehow grasps the situation.

"Not another word till you have had breakfast. Mona, sit down, dear, near by me. Children, you mustn't worry Mona. Rex, will you please ring for another cup?"

And meanwhile something seems to amuse the Reverend John, for he laughs softly to himself behind the newspaper. Perhaps, he too, has grasped the situation.

And Mona is not allowed to say a word till she has had a cup of tea, and some toast which Rex batters for her, as if the death of her grandmother had deprived Mona of the use of her fingers; but no doubt the toast tasted none the worse for the kind attention.

Mona's tears stay trembling on her lashes, and everyone pretends not to see them; only Rex wishes that the Reverend John and his wife and his children were a mile away that he might kiss those tears away himself.

"You mustn't say one word till you have had your breakfast," Nellie says, who is dying to

hear everything. "John, I wish you wouldn't ask questions before the children!"

Whereat all the children cock their ears, and listen with all their might. But they are all got rid of at last, and then Mona tells her story.

Nellie is furious, Rex choking with passion, and only the Reverend John seems slightly amused.

"That was rather a high-handed proceeding on the part of your cousin," he says. "She might have waited till the will had been read, at any rate."

"And I knew I might come to you," Mona says, smiling, with Rex standing tall and protective beside her.

Nellie kisses her kindly.

"I should have been very hurt if you had not come to us, dear! You shall be under my charge until I give you to Rex!"

Whereat Mona blushes a most lovely crimson, and John Challoner smiles thoughtfully to himself again.

"My poor darling, fancy you being out since this morning! Why did you wait till now before coming to us?"

Rex has got Mona to himself at last, and carried her off to a sheltered corner of the garden.

"I thought it would be too early, Rex, and I sat on the shore. It was such a lovely morning, too!"

"Yes, but after having been up all night! My dearest, you look so pale. Mona, I am frightened!"

"There is no need, Rex," and at his fond words her face is not pale now.

"I am only a little tired; and oh, Rex! I am so glad to think that poor grandmamma was fond of me before she died."

"Who could help being fond of you?" he answers, as any man would answer in like circumstances.

And while the mistress of Lonesome Lodge lies dead, and blinds are drawn down, Margaret sits in her own room with the door locked; and she is before the looking-glass, with a diamond necklace about her neck, diamond drops in her ears, and diamond stars flash and sparkle in her hair.

Pleased and breathless she looks at herself, turning her head from side to side; she has shut the shutters and lit the candles, the better to see the effect. And no thought of the poor dead woman lying a few doors away disturbs her from her amusement.

"If only Edward could see me," she thinks, triumphantly, "how pleased he would be! How they flash—how they sparkle like rays of light!" and the silence of Lonesome Lodge is unbroken save by the soft murmuring of the sea.

Dr. Smith arranges everything; telegraphs for lawyers, sees after the funeral arrangements, and takes all trouble off Margaret's hands.

"We shall be married at once," he says. "There will be nothing to prevent it; we can be married privately in less than a month."

Never a word of love. A lump rises to Margaret's throat as she hears him. She thinks of it again now as she sits with the diamonds sparkling on her neck and in her hair, and her eyes grow dim with tears.

Is Dr. Smith worth all the plotting and planning—all the base deception she has practised—all the falsehood?

"I cannot give him up!" she thinks, passionately; true in one thing at least—her love for him. "When we are married he will be kinder to me."

CHAPTER XVI.

The funeral is over!

Dr. Edward Smith took upon himself to act as chief mourner, and Rex Challoner and the lawyer also followed the hearse in the mourning carriage—or rather, Dr. Smith and

the lawyer occupied the chief mourning carriage, and Rex and his brother—who was to read the burial service—followed in Mrs. Rex's own brougham.

It is all over now. Mrs. Rex has been laid to rest for ever in hearing of the roar and moan of the sea.

Dr. Smith and the lawyer return to Lonesome Lodge, to enjoy the delights of reading the will; and the Reverend John takes the liberty of driving home in Mrs. Rex's carriage with Rex.

He comes straight into the drawing-room, where Mona is sitting, playing with the Rectory baby, and making a charming picture, Rex stands, with her sweet pathetic face bent down over the little one's fluffy head.

Mrs. Challoner is anxious to hear all about the funeral, but the Rectory is evidently in an impatient mood. He turns to Mona.

"I have come back to bring you to Lonesome Lodge; your presence will be necessary during the reading of the will."

"Must I go?" Mona flushes painfully; "I do not wish to meet Margaret."

"It is absolutely necessary. Rex, you will come too?"

"You must go, Mona, if John says so!" Nellie exclaims, taking the baby from her.

"Oh, what a pity you haven't got your mourning!"

"She can get any amount of mourning afterwards," the Reverend John says, smiling. "My dear child, don't look so troubled; Rex and I will be with you. You are quite safe with us."

And although it is the Rectory who makes this nice speech, it is Rex who gets the lovely, swift smile from Mona as she leaves the room to get ready, which is, after all, as it should be, as Rex comes for the smile.

The will has been read; all its pompous formality has been waded through by the lawyer, and Margaret stands flushed, exultant, the sole possessor of all Mrs. Rex's real and personal estate.

Everything except a few legacies to servants is hers and hers alone—Lonesome Lodge, the forty thousand pounds, and all.

She can hardly realize it yet. She looks at Dr. Smith, whose face is flushed too, and she moves a step towards him.

The lawyer folds up the will, and holds out his hand.

"Allow me to congratulate you, Miss Carlton. I am very happy to have been the bearer of such good news to so charming a young lady."

Margaret, clothed in the best and most correct of mourning, looks indeed charming with this glad, eager, exultant light flashing in her eyes.

Dr. Smith comes over to her too.

"You have my congratulations too, Margaret," and then, still holding her hand, he turns towards the lawyer, who is bowing and smiling before his new client. "We must both ask for your good wishes, sir; Miss Carlton is my promised wife."

"Then I trust I may be called upon soon to draw up the marriage settlements!" the little man says, airily, and laying his finger on the will. "I am sorry there is no small provision made for Miss Waring, the late Mrs. Rex's other grand-daughter, but I trust the young lady will not regret being dependent on your generosity."

"Of course I will do something for her," Margaret says, coldly. "If grandmamma had wished she could have left her something."

"Poor Miss Mona; pity help her, if she is dependent on Miss Margaret," Martin mutters, audibly, and Margaret glares at her in furious indignation.

"I suppose all this tiresome business being finished I may ask you both to come to lunch," she says, sweetly, looking first at the lawyer and then at Dr. Smith, falling readily into her new position as mistress of the house.

And they are leaving the room when the

rumble of wheels is heard, and the hall-door bells sounds clanging through the house.

"Who can it be?"

They are not left long in doubt. The tall form of the Reverend John Challoner appears at the door, with Mona leaning on his arm, and Rex Challoner following in the rear.

"What have they come for?"

To beg for pity for Mona, at her hands, thinks Margaret, glancing disdainfully at her cousin.

And so they stand for one instant in silence. Only Rex comes up to Mona's side, as if he would protect her from all the world.

Mr. Challoner speaks neither to Margaret nor Dr. Smith, but addresses himself entirely to Mr. Potts, the lawyer. And no warning or foreboding of what he is going to say comes to Margaret. No greeting has she vouchsafed Mona.

And Rex Challoner's forehead turns red with anger, and he comes a little nearer to Mona's side, and stands there at her right hand, while Margaret makes a mental calculation as to how little she can, out of the fullness of her wealth, grant Mona.

"I beg your pardon, sir," begins John Challoner, addressing Mr. Potts; "I have come as quickly as possible to be present at the reading of the will!"

"You are five minutes late, sir. I have just read the will!"

A little sternness seems to settle itself about the Rectory's lips. He had seen Margaret's face as she looked at Mona. And he smiles straight and hard now.

"Because, sir, there must be some slight mistake. I have the last will of the late Mrs. Rex here in my pocket."

Mr. Potts is equal to the occasion. He taps the will in his hand.

"This is Mrs. Rex's will made over two years ago, leaving everything to her grand-daughter, Miss Carlton."

"And this," says the Reverend John, taking a sealed packet from his breast-pocket, "is the last will and testament of Mrs. Rex, made the day before she died."

And for the life of him he cannot resist turning to look at Margaret Carlton, who is glaring at the packet now in Mr. Potts's hands, and trembling violently from head to foot.

One wild, beseeching glance she casts at Dr. Smith, who folds his arms across his chest, and listens with a face immovable as a mask.

Mr. Potts is purple up to the top of his bald head. Irregularities of this sort are a slur and a slight upon his profession.

It was shabby, to say the least of it, of the late Mrs. Rex to make a new will at the last moment—a will, moreover, that he had no part or lot in the compiling of.

"This is a most extraordinary proceeding, sir!" he says, cocking the old will under his arm and struggling with the new one and his spectacles.

"It can't be legal!" gasps Margaret, in a choked voice as he breaks the seals. "It is some mean, horrible plot! Grandmamma has left me everything!"

"Up to the present no one has denied the fact, Miss Carlton," Mr. Challoner says, sternly. "It would be wiser to allow Mr. Potts to acquaint us with the contents of the packet."

Mr. Potts breaks the seals, and takes out a common sheet of notepaper closely written on, and glances his eye over the contents.

"Bless my soul!" he cries, shaken out of all his little pompous primness. "If this document is genuine—"

"It is genuine!" Mr. Challoner says, firmly. "I drew up that will at Mrs. Rex's own request the day before her death. She was perfectly clear and competent to make a will; and it is properly signed and attested by two witnesses."

"For Heaven's sake, read it at once!" cries Margaret, whose face betrays the utmost anxiety and consternation. "Why do you keep us all in this suspense, Mr. Potts?" she asks, sharply.



[THE READING OF THE SEALED PACKET.—SHATTERED HOPES.]

Dr. Smith walks to the window, and stands looking out at the sea, and Margaret gazes helplessly after him.

Mr. Potts looks at Mona, who is still standing beside Rex, very grave and pale.

And then, with a preliminary cough, Mr. Potts reads the new will, which falls like a bombshell right into the midst of the little group.

Divested of all its legal phraseology and formalities, the scrap of paper is a very simple, plain little document indeed, stating in a very few words that Mrs. Rea revokes all former wills, and bequests and leaves the whole of her fortune and all her possessions to her granddaughter, Mona Waring; with the proviso that in case of the said Mona Waring dying without children the whole of the fortune should revert to Margaret Carlton, or her heirs.

"Bless my soul!" gasps Mr. Potts again, and darts a glance at Margaret, who is standing before him, with a face in which anger and disappointment struggle for mastery.

"It is a forgery!" she cries, harshly, raising her hand to her throat, as if she was choking. "A vile, wicked plot to deprive me of grandmamma's legacy! Edward! Edward! why do you stand there like that? You know it is a forgery!"

Dr. Smith turns slowly from his contemplation of the sea. His eyes glance first at Mona, whose hand has crept into Rex Challoner's clasp, and then at Margaret.

"I don't know anything about it," he says, sullenly. "It is my belief that Mrs. Rea was not in a fit state to make a will the day before she died. I suppose the question will be whether that will is a legal document or not?"

The Reverend John Challoner can be very firm when he chooses. It is to Margaret he speaks now.

"Miss Carlton, I drew up that will at your

grandmother's wish. She dictated it herself, word for word; and the latter clause she added, being, she said, under the impression that her husband would not have wished the money to pass out of the family; which, under certain contingencies, it might do so. The will is perfectly regular and perfectly legal. There was no undue influence. Mrs. Rea was perfectly clear and perfectly collected. She led me to believe that you would understand yourself why she had altered her will. I suppose there were private family reasons for doing so?"

Margaret hears him out, and her very lips turn white.

She looks slowly all round at the little group of faces till her eyes rest on Mona.

"Viper!" she gasps, and then there is a little confusion, for Margaret has fainted, and Dr. Smith comes to the front professionally, and she is carried upstairs.

"Shall I go with her?" Mona asks, trembling, but Mr. Challoner says no.

Mona would not be the person Miss Carlton would care to see on coming round.

Mr. Potts having now thoroughly assured himself that the will is genuine, and properly signed and attested by two witnesses—the butler of Lonesome Lodge and Mrs. Rea's own maid, Martin, in the presence of the Reverend John Challoner—comes forward to congratulate his new client, and shakes her warmly by the hand.

"Now that this very unpleasant scene is over, allow me to offer you my congratulations. Do you realise, Miss Waring, that you are the possessor of all your grandmother's wealth?"

"I did not wish to have it," Mona answers, her eyes full of trouble. "Margaret always expected it!"

"Yes, no doubt; but there is many a slip, you know."

Rex Challoner is standing gloomily by himself; his face expresses no joy at Mona's sudden fortune. He comes up to her now.

"I will leave you now. You will have things to arrange, and I shall only be in the way."

There is a little stiffness in his voice, and the eyes that look down into hers are regretful. He clasps her hand tightly, and a sad smile creeps about his lips.

"May I offer you my best wishes, too, now and always?"

And then he goes, leaving Mona a little unhappy, she hardly knows why.

She is left with Mr. Potts, who explains to her at some length the amount of her possessions. And the little lawyer seems a good deal surprised that Mona takes it all so quietly.

One suggestion she only makes.

"The money is all my own, Mr. Potts, to do what I like with?"

"Exactly so. You have forty thousand pounds, yielding an income of two thousand per annum, to make ducks and drakes with if you please, besides the house and estate of Lonesome Lodge and all your grandmother's goods and chattels, jewellery, and everything."

Mona thinks of the night that Margaret had talked so openly of what she would do when she was mistress of Lonesome Lodge.

Now the tables have been turned indeed.

"I should like," she says, timidly, fixing her own beautiful hazel eyes on the bright little grey orbs of Mr. Potts, "to settle something on my cousin Margaret—to make her a present of a sum of money."

"Very generous of you, Miss Waring. Very generous of you, indeed!" says Mr. Potts, remembering the tone of Margaret's voice when she had said, "Viper!" "My dear young lady, all this can be arranged later on. I understand that Miss Carlton is engaged to be married to Dr. Smith."

Mona says nothing, but she thinks that it is highly improbable that Dr. Smith will marry Margaret now.

(To be continued.)



['I UNDERSTAND," PANSY SAYS, "HE CAN TURN US OUT IF HE LIKES; STILL HE CANNOT MAKE ME MARRY HIM."]

NOVELETTE.]

TRUE LOVE'S REWARD.

—30—

CHAPTER I.

"That pride that goeth before a fall,
That pride that overthrows and ruins all."

THE spring sunshine was illuminating North Court, and the fair demense lying around, with cheery beams, and shafts of golden translucent light that fell on velvety sward, and budding leaf, and blooming flower, as though trying to make them brighter—quicken them into greater life and beauty—making the burning gold of the crocus appear deeper, and the cloudy edge of snowdrops in the border, snowier. The violets smell more fragrant; the blue periwinkle vie with the azure tint of the cloudless sky, in whose bright heights sundry larks were soaring and singing, as though rejoicing at the departure of chill King Frost, and the coming of gay, jubilant Spring, while the lute-voiced blackbird, and brown, speckled thrush called and whistled to each other from early morn, in company with other feathered choristers, who had left their orchestras over the seas empty, and returned once more to old England and northern climes.

Tranquil and peaceful looked the old stone mansion lying embowered in its ancestral trees, whose giant branches had sheltered and shaded it for a couple of hundred years and more—some of whom, indeed, had been fine trees before the house was built, and witnessed its erection by workmen who wore the costume of Elizabeth's time, for it was in her reign that North Court was built by Godfrey Churchill, an admiral who had helped to defeat the Spanish Armada, and to whom the Maiden Queen gave a large grant of land in Hampshire, and a round sum of money wherewith to build him a residence, in which he might peacefully and pleasantly spend the

last days of his life, the early ones of which had been passed in scenes of bloodshed and turmoil.

That Godfrey the bluff heartily appreciated his monarch's gift there can be no doubt. The family archives showed that, for he took unto himself a fair young wife, who bore him twin daughters and an only son and heir, and lived in tranquil happiness in his great mansion amid beautiful sylvan scenes and rural occupations, and thrived and multiplied his possessions, his flocks and herds, his horses and asses, and when he died left well-filled granaries, flourishing fields, and a heavy purse to his only son, along with the stone mansion.

All the succeeding Churchills, descendants of the bluff sailor, showed just as keen an appreciation of the family luck as he had, and enjoyed the good things that fell to their lot. There was no entail. The estate simply went from father to son, generation after generation, for only one son was born to each master of North Court, though daughters were numerous, and, in most cases, married well.

At last this rule was broken. Cherton Churchill had but one daughter and one son, both of whom married early in life, and had only children, Clarissa Saxby a son whom she called Cherton after her father, and Lionel Churchill a daughter named Sophonisba after his mother, but called Pansy from a very early age, on account of her having eyes the colour of that flower, "deeply, darkly, beautifully" purple.

Old Cherton was deeply grieved when he found he would have no grandson in the direct male line to succeed to the family honours, possessions and estates in his due time; and therefore departing from the rule observed by his forefathers, made a will, leaving North Court and all that went with it equally between Sophonisba, otherwise Pansy, and young Cherton, on condition that they married.

In case of refusal they were each to have one hundred pounds per annum to keep them from starvation, and everything was to go to different charities.

Lionel was wild with rage when he learnt, for the first time, on the reading of the will after the funeral, that he was only tenant for life, that nothing really belonged to him, that he only held the estates in trust for others—perhaps a set of hospitals, and deaf and dumb asylums—that he had not the power to fell a single tree, nor dispose of a single rood of all the broad lands that lay around, nor alter any one thing. It was unprecedented! It was monstrous!

Such a thing had never been heard of in the family before, and, moreover, it was robbing his child, for if she happened to prove contumacious hereafter, and refused to marry her cousin—and Heaven only knew what she might do, women are such queer, emotional, obstinate creatures—then she would be reduced to a paltry hundred a-year, less than half what the women of the family habitually spent on their gowns and furbelows—this, too, after being brought up in a luxurious and extravagant fashion, and believing herself to be heiress of North Court; for she, by the terms of the will, was to know nothing until she attained her twenty-first birthday. Then, and then only, was she to be told how her fate, her life, her matrimonial prospects had been settled for her by other people, and how little she had to hope for, or expect, if she ran counter to her grandfather's arbitrary wishes.

Lionel Churchill was quite a young man, only thirty when the old Squire died; and as he had been a widower three years he would have married again, though his heart lay buried in his young wife's grave, in hope of having a son, had he known of his father's will, and the conditions attached thereto.

But, of course, he knew nothing until death had sealed the testator's lips, rendered useless his hands, robbed him of the power of

revoking his unjust bequest, even if he had been inclined to do so, which is doubtful.

The Churchills were a stubborn, obstinate race—stiff-necked, proud, unbending, unforgiving. Their *yes* was *yes*, and their *no*, *no*. They brooked no opposition, no rebuke, and were wise in their own conceits, fancying that what they did must be right.

"The King can do no wrong," was their motto, and for King might have been substituted "a Churchill!" It was not likely the old man would have revoked his "last will and testament," or have altered it by this omission or introduction of a single word.

A certain amount of the obstinacy and pride of her race was observable in Pansy, and it came out and was painfully apparent when anyone attempted to cross or annoy her.

Her father had never done so. He simply idolized his beautiful child, and, if the truth must be told, helped to spoil a fine nature by unlimited indulgence, because she could be so winning when she chose, and also because he stood just a wee bit in awe of his black-browed, imperious-tempered daughter.

He was not altogether a happy frame of mind that glad, bright spring day, as he stood in his luxurious library gazing out over the hills, and woods and meadows, in their vernal robe of budding green, that all were his—for the time being at least; and he was wondering, as he had wondered scores of times before, would they ever belong to his child and his nephew, or if also they would pass the old halls and corridors, and alien voices sing 'neath the beamed ceilings, strangers' rate where his race so long had lorded it, and Pansy be reduced from a proud heiress-child to mediocre, genteel poverty?

Who could tell? Certainly he could not. It wanted but two months to her twenty-first birthday, and then she would have to decide as to her future—he would have to tell her all.

Cherton was already cognizant of the terms of his grandfather's will, and though not particularly keen on matrimony did not mean to make a fool of himself and refuse wealth, because to refuse it he would have to take a young pretty woman to wife.

No, not he, indeed. Besides, he admired his cousin immensely, who was seven years his junior, and he had often thought she was just the girl he would choose to mate with, until two years previously, when his mother, to prepare his mind, and acquaint him to the idea of an arranged marriage, told him what was expected of him.

Then, and then only, he began to discover that there was a great deal about Pansy which he would not relish in a wife—too much pride and determination, too great an independence and fearlessness, qualities that he had admired before he knew she was chosen for him! But that of course made all the difference in the world, altered his opinion greatly.

Still, notwithstanding all this, he meant to carry out old Cherton's wishes if Pansy proved willing. There was just a chance she might not, he knew, and then they would both be content with one hundred per annum—have instead of sharing a splendid estate and ample income.

He was to come to North Court, and improve the golden opportunity by a two months' courtship, before the lady was told the true state of the case—try and win her before she became prejudiced against him, as they all thought she would be; and to prosecute his wooing he had obtained leave of absence, and was expected there that day.

His cousin was going to drive over to North-down Station, and bring him to the Court in her own prize phaeton, with its pretty pair of grey ponies, little knowing that it was her future husband—as arranged by other folk—that she was going to fetch.

"I wonder if it will be all right?" muttered Lionel Churchill, uneasily, as he stood by the window, staring straight ahead at the gleam of blue, sunlit, dancing sea, seen

through the vista of thick clustering trees. "If it will turn out as we all wish it to. If she refuses—and she may. She's a bit queer-tempered, like an ill-trained horse. It will be bad for her, and worse for me—utter ruin! Nothing short of ruin, for I shan't be able to meet my liabilities, and can't raise a single farthing without Cherton's help," and a drawn, grey look settled on his handsome face, and his eyes were full of despair.

And well might they be. The Churchills were not an economical or saving race. They were lucky, or had been up to his time, and things had prospered with them, though they had hardly kept an eye to the main chance, and were given to let things slide a bit.

He had done worse than this. To crown the recklessness of his virtual disinclination, and smother his indignation and wrath after his father's death, he plunged into all sorts of dissipation and extravagance; started a pack of hounds, and the month when at his house, was merry, and conducted in a more costly and lavish fashion than anywhere else in the country; purchased a clipper yacht, a box at the opera, several additional dentures for the use of friends, and started some racers, backing them largely, and being heavily entertained men of higher rank and greater wealth than himself, and, in fact, did all he could to get himself deeply into debt.

The thought of his little three-year-old child had no power to stay him from his wild courses—his mad extravagance. He went on and on, plunging recklessly, and stopped only when forced to do so by an absolute want of ready money, and a refusal from all the members of the tribes of Israel, with whom he had had monetary dealings, to advance another farthing until he paid off the heavy sums owing to them.

For the last four years he had leisure to regret his recklessness and insensate folly, and to experience the delights of being dunned by pitiless Jews and importunate tradespeople, to know what it was not to be able to pay his servants their wages, or to keep a liberal table; to have to economize in a hundred petty, horrible ways, and to be aware all the time that it was useless, that the interest for money borrowed was creeping up into a vast sum; and that he could never free himself. To do that ten thousand pounds would be required, and where was a sum like that to come from?

He, alas! knew but one way of getting it, and that was by the help of his son-in-law that was to be.

On his marriage with Pansy, certain properties in and about London became Cherton's absolutely. Also, he had the right to fall timber in the woods and forests about North Court, and would have capital to work the coalpits now lying idle, which would yield large profits.

He would be a rich—a very rich—man from the hour in which he plighted his troth at Heaven's altar to Sophonisba Churchill, and able to lend, or, more properly speaking, to give his father-in-law the thousands of which he stood in such need.

Uncle and nephew had always been excellent friends, and Lionel did not doubt but that the careless, gay-hearted soldier would give him the sum he wanted; which he could easily get by the sale of the London property. Only of course, if Pansy proved contumacious, all these rosy plans, these pleasant dreams, would end in unpleasant and gloomy realities for everyone.

The Squire knew he could not go on as he had been doing during the last four years. His credit became scantier and scantier, his comforts nearly nil, and his daughter's questions and curiosity were things difficult to answer and satisfy.

Why did he keep no carriage, except her pony phaeton? Why did he go on riding that miserable old hack Hercules? Why did they use cheap plated forks and spoons, when they were the possessors of the famed Churchill silver-gilt plate? Why did they have only

one man-servant, and that a nondescript kind of individual, who was a little bit gardener, a little bit butler, and very much stable-help? Why didn't he send old Polly Jones, the know-nothing, cook away, and get a French chef? Why had she to put up with a country wench as maid, instead of a smart, nimble-fingered foreigner? Why didn't he give the big dinners he used to? Why didn't the hounds meet at the Court as they had done for so many years? Why couldn't she have a sealskin and sable jacket, and pretty new gowns, instead of old dingy things? Surely she was an heiress? Surely she had a right to be so well attired? And, lastly, though not least, she was particular in her tastes after certain valuable pictures, rare bits of china, bronzes, marbles, antique jewellery, and other things that from time to time mysteriously disappeared, and did not reappear, and into the cause of the frequent visits of certain sallow-faced, hooky-nosed gentlemen, who were anxious in visiting the master of the Court, who stayed long, dined with him in the library, and left reluctantly? These questions the Squire found difficult indeed to answer.

"Oh! what a tangled web we weave,
When first we promise to deceive!"

He had to deceive his child by a tissue of lies. How could he tell her that it was with difficulty he kept the few untrained servants he did; that Hercules was not sold for the simple reason that nobody would buy such a sorry brute; that the famous plate was in the possession of some of the hooky-nosed gentlemen, along with the pictures, china, and curiosities, pledged until his debts were paid; that the plain clothes she wore were got on credit, on the faith of being paid for when she came into her inheritance; and that the pony phaeton was kept going by Cherton, who had presented it to her some five years before!

As to the sallow-faced gentry, he could not tell her why he received them when he refused to entertain his brother magistrates, and the county-folk generally, because they must be fed with dainties, served on silver, and attended by well-trained servants, while the sons of the tribes of Israel were content with bread-and-cheese, and table-beer, eaten off a newspaper, by way of a table-cloth. No, he couldn't tell her; and so he lied and prevaricated, and was afraid to meet the glance of those clear, deep, panny eyes, that seemed to look him through and through, make him feel horribly conscious of his utter unworthiness, and ashamed of his career of dissipation and extravagance.

Had he been even commonly careful he might have saved a considerable sum during the eighteen years he had been in possession of the estates, and have been able to leave his child a fair sum to back up the scanty income left her by her grandfather in case of her refusing to comply with his wishes. But as it was—well, as it was, he simply quaked in his shoes, at the mere thought of her refusing to espouse her cousin, as then he would have to give an account of his stewardship perhaps to others during his lifetime, and it wasn't much to his credit, and at all events, after his death things must inevitably come to light that would cover his memory with shame.

CHAPTER II.

"Downcast, or shooting glances far,
How beautiful his eyes,
That blend the nature of the star
With that of summer skies!"

LIONEL CHURCHILL'S brow grew more wrinkled, the perplexed look in his eyes greater, as a light tread was heard outside, and, then the door opening, admitted his daughter.

"Well, dad," she asked, in clear, ringing tones, "have you made up your mind? Are you coming with me to the station?"

"No, I think not, my dear," he answered, hesitatingly, looking at her furtively to see if she were vexed at his refusal to accompany her. "Cherton, no doubt, would rather see you alone."

"I don't suppose Cherton will care a fig one way or the other," she laughed. "He will have plenty of opportunities of seeing me alone. It really looks like a plot," she went on a minute later, as she fastened the last button of her driving gloves, and smoothed them over her wrists.

"What looks like a plot?" he queried in alarm.

"Neither you nor Aunt Sissa coming with me!"

"But, my love," with a helpless glance at the ceiling, the book-lined shelves, the fireplace—anywhere but at his daughter, "I—we—I—can't come—we are busy!"

"Indeed! You look busy, standing there gazing out of the window at your meads, and streams, and other possessions."

"I—I—mean I am going to be busy. I—I—expect a friend—a gentleman, every minute!"

"Indeed!" she said again, a cold look passing over her face. "One of the tribe with the abnormal development of nasal organ?"

"My dear!" with a little uneasy, expostulatory movement of the white, aristocratic hands, that had grown so wofully thin and transparent-looking of late.

"Well, dad, most of your friends," with a strong emphasis on the word, "have huge noses!"

"I—don't—think so."

"No? Well I do. However, we won't talk about them as you don't seem to care to discuss them. What is Aunt Sissa busy about? When I last saw her she was lying on a sofa, reading a novel."

"She has the dinner to see to and general arrangements to attend to," he explained, eagerly. "You know what officers are. Cherton is accustomed to a mess, where everything is done in first-rate style. We must make him comfortable here."

"You seem particularly anxious to please Cherton," she observed, looking at him fixedly. "As a rule you don't much care what the few people who come here are regaled with."

"Your aunt is anxious," he declared. "You know how particular she is in these kind of matters!"

"Yes, I know," she acknowledged, "and I must say that we have been ever so much more comfortable in every respect since she has been here. I hope she will stay a long time with us."

"She will stay just as long as you like, dear!"

"Or as you like, you mean. I wonder why you always speak as though the Court was mine, and not yours?"

"All that's mine is thine, lassie," he quoted, trying to smile.

"Hardly, dad. Still, I am glad you like aunt being here, only what will Cherton say?"

"Nothing. What should he say? He is generally with his regiment, and when he has leave he can just as well come here as to a furnished house in town, if he wishes to spend it with his mother."

"True. I shall suggest that to him, for she adds greatly to my comfort here."

"I don't doubt it; she is an excellent manager. And now, hadn't you better start, Pansy? You won't have much time to spare."

"The train won't be in for an hour, dad, and you know how fast Topey and Quick-silver can go when put to it."

"Still, if you loiter in any of your favourite spots you will be late."

"Very well, then, I will make a start," and giving him a kiss she went out, and got into the trim phaeton Cookson, the nondescript man-servant, had brought round, and drove leisurely towards Northdowns.

The road was straight and fair, and the ponies knew it well, so she let them go their own pace, and did not trouble about guiding

them much, for she was preoccupied with thoughts, trying to solve the mystery that she felt underlay her father's manner and actions, and evident nervousness with regard to herself.

She was passionately, devotedly attached to him, and she longed to know what was wrong, in order that she might try to right it. Still, as he had not given her his confidence, she was proud to ask for it, preferring to remain in the dark on various subjects.

Though she was pleased at having Cherton's mother at the Court, she felt there was some reason—some very strong reason—for her coming there.

She had a fair income, and being of a wandering turn of mind was in the habit of taking a furnished house in town for the season, and then migrating in the autumn to Scarborough, Brighton, Eastbourne, or some other seaside place, flitting on later in the year to Rome, or Naples, or the Riviera, to sunshine and warmth, leaving the grey skies and biting winds of old England behind, until spring brought with it once more balmy breezes and the promise of fair weather.

She had come straight from Rome to the Court in February, and Pansy well knew it was an unheard-of thing for her to return to England so early. It was, therefore, not surprising that she wondered at it, and saw there were wheels within wheels working.

Miss Churchill found things far more comfortable under her aunt's régime. She brought two servants with her, a sort of companion-maid, and a cook, who quite displaced Polly Jones in the kitchen, relegating her to the peeling of potatoes and shelling of peas, while she concocted toothsome-made dishes, the like of which had not graced the board of the Court for many a long day, and which were much appreciated. She had some of the rooms, long shut up for the lack of someone to dust and clean them, opened, hired a piano for her niece, and a boy to help Cookson in the garden, and generally brightened and smartened up the place, including Pansy's wardrobe, which wanted it sadly.

Altogether it was a mystery, and the girl's mind was full of it as she drove slowly along. She was so absorbed that she did not see a young fellow tearing across a field as hard as he could, with a couple of dogs at his heels, in her direction, and awoke with a start to the fact of his presence as he addressed her.

"Day-dreaming, Miss Churchill?" he asked, with a smile, as she reined in the dapple-grey ponies, and held out her hand.

"I think I was," she admitted, an answering smile on her lips.

"A penny for your thoughts!"

"They are not worth that sum."

"That is for me to judge of."

"Do you think so?"

"Most certainly I do. Where are you going to?"

"To Northdown-station."

"Do you expect friends?" he inquired, while a shade passed over his handsome face.

"Yes. My cousin, Cherton Saxby is coming to stay with us."

"Ah! He has not been here for some time, has he?"

"No. Over a year."

"Will he make a long stay?"

There was a keen look of anxiety on Roger Cleveland's visage as he put this question.

"Two months at least."

"Quite a visitation."

"We don't think so. We shall be only too glad to have him with us."

"Naturally. Only others won't."

"Why not?" she questioned in surprise, looking up at him, but as she encountered the gaze of his dark eyes her own fell, and she blushed redly.

"We shall see very little of you at the Cottage."

"I don't see why you should."

"Your time will be fully and pleasantly occupied. You won't have a minute to spare to come and see mother."

"Oh, yes, I shall!"

"You think so now. Time will show."

"I always enjoy coming to the Cottage," she declared.

"Do you?" he asked, eagerly.

"Of course. You know I do."

"And do you know how we value your visits?" he asked, softly, bending towards her, his dark face aglow with passionate admiration.

"I—I—no!" she managed to say.

"Then let me tell you," he implored, burning to pour out some of the love he felt for this beautiful girl, with her deep, unfathomable eyes.

"Not now!" she murmured, hurriedly, "another time. I—I shall be late."

"Promise you will give me a hearing soon?" he whispered, clasping her hand closely in both his.

"I promise," she murmured, knowing full well what it was he would have to say; and then as she lifted the ribbons the greys flew on, and he was left standing bare-headed in the road, gazing after her with adoration on his face, an expression which neither Mr. Lionel Churchill nor Mrs. Clarissa Saxby would have liked or approved of.

Firstly, because he was quite handsome enough to fascinate any girl, with her heart irrevocably. Secondly, because Roger was a sort of *nécessaire*, a good-for-nothing, reckless, sentimental, idle, extravagant young fellow, with not a penny in the world wherewith to bless himself with in the present, and little to look forward to in the future.

He was the only son, nay, the only child, of an officer's widow, who had only fifty pounds a-year beside the scanty pension she received through her deceased husband, and who had come to Northdown and rented a pretty little picturesque cottage on Mr. Churchill's estate, just at the extreme edge of the park, because it was advertised to be let at a merely nominal rent; and, though very small, was quite large enough to accommodate her, her son, and an old faithful servant who had been with her all through the horrors of the Indian mutiny, and still cleaved unto her mistress in the days of her poverty and loneliness.

Roger was not much of a help, nor a comfort, to his widowed mother. He was twenty-two, and had never done a stroke of work, nor earned a penny—and it didn't look as if he meant to. He was laziness personified, mixed with a good big dash of selfishness.

Nature, with her usual subtle mockeries and queer tricks, had given this useless, faulty-tempered creature a most beautiful face and figure. Both were perfect. He was tall, strong, lithe, active; square shoulders, his throat rising like a column from them; his head, gracefully poised thereon, might well have been sculptured for the Apollo Belvidere. The features, straight and clearly cut; the hair, jet black, and clustering over the broad, white brow in soft rings; the lips, bright vermilion, beautifully shaped, and shaded with a dusky moustache; the brows arched and delicately pencilled; the skin a clear, pale white, and the eyes—the handsomest feature in this handsome face—of a bronze hue, deep, soft, melting, fringed with jetty lashes, long and curling as any dandelion in her teens. Altogether, he was a perfect specimen of manly beauty, and knew it, and boasted of it when he could—which was not seldom.

His mother idolized him, and was as wax in his skilful fingers. She gave him all she could, content to be half-fed, shabby, comfortable, so long as he was well-cared for and satisfied. And Mrs. McGee, her old nurse, shared in the worship of this clay-footed idol, and had always done her best to spoil him; working with her mistress from rosy morn to dewy eve, contriving, cooking, patching, mending, scrubbing, washing, and ironing, slaving to make the cottage bright and cheerful, and to keep his linen snowy, and his few clothes neat, while he whipped the trout streams for the speckled, finny dwellers therein; or, gun in hand, wandered through neighbouring

preserves, where he had no shadow of a right, popping at the partridges or pheasants, or strolled to the meets, or joined the skaters on over-flowed, ice-bound meadow; or in summer lay under a haystack, lazily smoking a cigarette, his hat tilted over his eyes, day-dreaming, building castles in the air; going over carefully the names and advantages of the different heiresses and girls of means whom he knew, and always trying back to the one he headed the list with—Pansy Churchill—and installing her, in his airy dwelling, as *châtelaine*, queen of all.

That he loved her as well as such a man, with such a shallow, hollow, selfish nature could love there is no doubt; still, there is a doubt if he would ever have thought of her had she not been the reputed heiress of North Court and the fair lands lying around. That certainly attracted him; though, perhaps, her beauty and winsomeness completed the conquest, and made him feel that he would willingly sacrifice himself at her shrine, though it would be decided immolation—according to his way of thinking—if he had to do it at any other fair one's, not even excepting Topsy Weldon, the retired Birmingham nailman's pretty, flaxen-haired daughter, who would come into a round sum on her wedding-day, as he had taken care to find out, and who adored him, and was quite ready to become his wife if he would ask her. He hadn't done so, and he didn't mean to while there was the smallest chance of Pansy saying "Yes." Still, he kept her on hand in case of accidents, and made himself agreeable sometimes—when he felt inclined to—which delighted the poor, foolish little half-bred thing, and stretched his legs under her father's mahogany with cool nonchalance and condescension.

Altogether he was not exactly a desirable acquaintance for a wealthy young woman; and it was no wonder that neither Mr. Churchill nor Mrs. Saxby approved of him or encouraged his visits—a fact which did not deter him from calling there often, and way-laying Pansy on every possible occasion.

Meanwhile she drove on to the station in rather a reckless fashion, a tumult of different feelings at war in her breast. She was, of course, flattered at the unmistakable meaning of his looks and words—what woman would not have been? and she fancied him somewhat; but she was hardly prepared to say "yes" to him should he ask her to become his wife.

Pansy was no love-lorn, foolish young woman, prone to lose her heart to anyone with a handsome face and glib tongue, and she had heard sundry remarks from her aunt and father that showed her this would-be lover was not a paragon of perfection exactly; indeed, rather the reverse. Still, he was very fascinating and devoted, and young men were not plentiful, so she was inclined to forget his shortcomings—at any rate, as a lover.

She was so absorbed in her reflections as the threatened proposal that she did not notice the train as it came in until the panting and snorting of the engine attracted her attention, and then she looked eagerly towards the door from which the few passengers who alighted at Northdown were issuing.

First came a burly, black-browed fellow with a bag, having the appearance of a commercial traveller, then a yokel, then a neat-looking woman with a basket on her arm; she was followed by a ruddy-cheeked, hale-looking old fellow in gaiters, and velvet shooting-coat, to whom Pansy was evidently an object of veneration, for he tugged vigorously at his forelock, and scraped his heel in the road as he passed her—he was one of the small farmers on her father's estate. Then came a poorly-clad woman with two children; and last, though not least, a tall, sunburnt individual, whose close-cropped hair and erect bearing showed plainly that he was in the army. He was looking about just a little indifferently, when his eyes lighted on the pony-phaeton; and then, in a moment his whole aspect changed, and he strode forward,

a smile on his tanned visage that disclosed a set of even, white teeth, and made him look extremely pleasant, removing the slightly stern expression that his face habitually wore when in repose.

"So you've come to meet me, Pansy?" he said, possessing himself of her gauntleted hand, and giving it a good squeeze, while he looked at her earnestly.

"Yes. Did you think I would not?" she asked, looking up at him beamingly, not a shade of embarrassment on the lovely face, not the faintest trace of shyness in the purple eyes that met his so frankly—rather too frankly to please a wooer who knew how much depended upon eye or nay.

"I hardly thought you would take the trouble."

"How modest you have become!" with a light laugh.

"Was I not always so, too?"

"No. I can't give you credit for that."

"Well, give me the credit of something else, then," he rejoined, "and believe that I am very glad to see you again."

"And I also to see you," she replied, just a wee bit carelessly.

"I wonder if you mean that?" he queried, again regarding her steadfastly.

"Of course. Why should I not mean it?"

"You always were a tease."

"Not half such a one as you are."

"Oh, oh! All I know in that way I learnt from you."

"Cherton!" she exclaimed, with pretty indignation; "how can you say such a thing?"

"Easily. It is the truth."

"Rubbish. How could I teach you anything when you are ever so much older than I am?"

"You speak as though I was a Methu-selah."

"So you are, in my eyes," she retorted.

"Thanks. Still I am only seven years your senior, and I don't look very old, do I?"

"Not very," she acknowledged, examining him critically, and meeting the full glance of his eyes, as her own travelled over his face.

They were very beautiful eyes; deep blue, fringed with long black lashes, so bright that they did, indeed, seem to "blend the nature of the star with that of summer skies," very expressive, and gave an intellectual look to his face. Strictly speaking, he was not a handsome man; his features were irregular, his nose the reverse of Grecian; still his appearance was eminently aristocratic. His head small and well-shaped, his teeth good; a splendid fair moustache shaded his upper lip, and, like most military men, he was so neat and smart that he was a hundred times more pleasant to look at than many Adonis's would be, with faultlessly regular features.

"A man is only as old as he feels," he laughed, as he got into the phaeton, "and I feel not a day more than twenty-five!"

"That only knocks three years off."

"Better than putting three years on!"

"Perhaps so."

"Am I to drive?"

"Just as you like."

"What an indifferent answer!"

"Is it?"

"You know it is. I shall punish you by taking the ribbons," and he suited the action to the word.

"No punishment at all. I feel lazy to-day."

"Really; then I wonder you mustered up courage to come and meet me."

"There was no one else to come."

"How was that?"

"Dad and aunt said they were busy."

"What about?"

"I don't know."

"How is mother?"

"Very well."

"And uncle?"

"He says he is well, but he looks wretchedly. Do you know, Cherton, I am sure there is some mystery on foot."

"My dear child, how can you be so absurd

as to say such a thing?" he said, quickly, as he bent down over the reins to hide the flush that rose to his bronzed face, despite his efforts to prevent it.

"I am not a child; and I am quite certain there is something at the Court," she returned, with quiet conviction.

"What makes you think so?" he asked, after a pause, keeping his eyes fixed on the ponies.

"My father's manner chiefly. He is terribly nervous and ill at ease, especially with me, and he seems to get thinner and more wretched-looking every day."

"Is that all?"

"No, it is not. There is some reason for your mother having come to stop with us."

"Don't you like to have her with you?" he queried, eagerly.

"Most certainly I do. We know what it is to have a little comfort about us now. Still, I could never believe that she departed from her almost invariable rule of remaining in the South until May and return to England in February unless she had some strong motive."

"I think you are fanciful, Pansy."

"No, you don't," she said, coolly.

"That is hardly polite," he remarked, rather nettled.

"I can tell by the look in your eyes that you don't. You only want to put me off trying to find anything out solving the mystery."

"Nothing of the kind," he said, trying to speak unconcernedly, yet feeling it would be a difficult task to win this beautiful, wilful girl, with her keen perception and clever knowledge of human nature. "There is nothing to put you off!"

"There may be a difference of opinion about that. If there is nothing, will you explain why my father never entertains now?—why we have next to no servants?—why I have one new gown in the year, and wear cheap, coarse boots and renovated hats and bonnets?—why half the rooms, and those the best and most spacious, are shut up and partly dismantled?—and, lastly, though not least, why those horrid, hook-nosed men come so frequently and remain with dad, and why he seems so worried after their visits? Tell me that, please?"

"Don't ask conundrums, mam'selle."

"You won't give me an answer, though you know all about it, I am sure. How unkind!" and her cheeks flushed, and her eyes sparkled and she looked so bewitching, that he laid his hand tenderly on hers, and said, gently,—

"Don't think me unkind, Pansy; I am not that. Wait until the Squire takes you into his confidence. He will do so soon, because shortly you come of age. I will tell you this much, though I think my uncle might not like my doing so; he has monetary troubles."

"Serious ones?" she asked, gravely.

"Very serious, I believe."

"And he has told me nothing—has not shared his troubles with me!" she exclaimed, reproachfully.

"He did not wish to bother you," rejoined her cousin, a trifle uneasily, glancing at her.

"As though he could do that!" she murmured, a tender smile rippling over her face. "It would be the greatest pleasure of my life to assist him. However, I shall be able to after I am twenty-one; then if we wish it we can cut down the timber, and make alterations, and he will be all right again."

"Oh, yes, of course—of course," agreed Captain Saxby, while a queer smile curved his lips. "You are very fond of your father, Pansy?" he added, questioningly.

"I idolize him!" she answered, simply.

"Then you won't have much love to give a husband?" he ventured, letting his eyes dwell on her.

"It hardly follows," she replied, slightly embarrassed; "it is such a different kind of love."

"True. Of course you would do anything for the Squire?"

"Anything that would promote his happiness."

"North Court will be mine," murmured

Cherton, as he turned the ponies' heads in at the great red gates surmounted by a golden coronet, on which stood a fierce-looking cockatrice, holding in its claws a ribbon, on which was the motto, "The King can do no wrong," but he did not say it triumphantly, and in his heart he was wishing that he might woo and win the girl at his side in a fair and open courtship.

CHAPTER III.

"Love is not love,
Which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no! It is an even fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken.
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be
taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out, even to the edge of doom."

THE Squire and Mrs. Saxby were waiting in the entrance hall to welcome Cherton, and the young man noticed how ill and worn the former looked, and how furtively and fearfully he glanced at his daughter; and for the first time in his life he pitied this man, who to a great extent had been the architect of his own misfortunes, and brought about his own undoing by his reckless extravagance and folly.

"Had a pleasant journey?" asked the elder man as Cookson took the cover off the soup tureen with a flourish, and his master dipped the ladle in.

"Very pleasant. Seemed a trifle long. That was because I was anxious to get here, and enjoy my fair cousin's society."

"You fair cousin is flattered," returned Pansy, with a smile and glance in his direction, for she had always been fond of Cherton; and somehow or the other he looked nicer, seemed nicer, now than he ever had before, and she was quite ready to be amiable, and met his advances toward great friendliness half-way.

"Glad to hear it, dear coz. You ought to be, really. If you had only heard me anathematizing. The slowness of the trains, &c., &c., you would understand how much energy I expended."

"And probably wasted," she interrupted.

"Exactly so, on the dunderheaded officials."

"You should never lose your temper," remarked Mrs. Saxby, who always took things *au sérieux*, and could never by any chance see a joke.

"Of course not, mother. I very seldom do."

"Not often," she allowed, "but when you do—"

She did not finish, only held up her hands, and shrugged her shoulders.

"You mean he gets in a fury?" queried her brother.

"He does."

"Now, mater, that is hardly fair, exposing my failings," he expostulated, glancing at Pansy to see how she took it.

"It is your only serious one," returned Mrs. Saxby, "and you don't often indulge in a tempest."

"Mother, mother, you will frighten my relatives."

"You won't frighten me," retorted Miss Churchill, with an uplifting of her dainty head. "I like a man with a temper."

"I am glad to hear it," he said pointedly, looking at her, and noting the blush that crept up even to the roots of her wavy hair.

"Are you?" she managed to say.

"I am. Most emphatically, and it surprises me."

"Why, pray?"

"Because, Miss Churchill," with elaborate politeness, "you are blessed, or the reverse, with a tidy temper yourself, and as a rule folks like their opposites."

"Cherton, how dare you say such a thing?" she exclaimed.

"Truth, my dear! Never mind speaking the truth."

"You are a hypocrite," with supreme disdain.

"I am not, as I'll prove to you."

"Are you going to sing to me?" he demanded a little later on, as he lounged into the drawing-room, and stood beside the piano, where she was sitting.

"If you are a good boy I will."

"What can I do to be that?" he asked, looking down at her, and thinking how rarely lovely she was.

"Don't say nasty and unkind things to me," she pouted.

"I hope I never shall say anything that you will be able to construe into nasty or unkind," he said gravely. "Believe me, I shall never wish to do that."

"Of course. I know," she said, surprised at his grave tone, "you were only jesting just now."

"Yes. Sing me this," holding out a song which she took and commenced, the refrain of which was—

"Come back, sweetheart, forget, forgive,
And bid me love again and live."

"You sing that as though you meant it," he remarked, when she had finished.

"Do I?"

"Yes. As though you were appealing to some obdurate swain really in existence."

"What nonsense!" with another blush.

"And I believe there is," he went on coolly. "That blush commits you. What is his name?"

"I can't tell you!"

"That sounds very bad, not even to know your lover's name!"

"I have never had a lover in my life," she answered, simply. Yet, even as she spoke, the remembrance of Roger Cleveland's passionate words and looks passed across her mind, and once more the red blood mounted to cheek and brow.

Cherton was well-pleased and content at this, and attributed the blush to his own words, and bade her a warm good-night as they all went upstairs together, determining to storm the fortress and win at once.

But the next day came and went, and the next. A whole week went by, and he had not broken the ice—had not thrown down the slight barriers that lay between him and his cousin—had not declared himself. Why this was he hardly knew. He was certainly charmed and fascinated by Pansy, who, in his eyes, seemed to have improved, matured, and become more tender and womanly during the past year. And he found everything at North Court pleasant and comfortable under his mother's régime. Then he was constantly with his cousin, and the simple country life pleased him.

In the dewy mornings he would stroll out into the flower garden, and find Pansy there with a basket; and he would hold it for her while she nipped off snowy sprays of May, trails of golden laburnum and purple hyacinth, late primroses, and mixed them with fern-fronds, and decorated the breakfast-table and the rooms with them, chatting to him all the while in her girlish, innocent way, and taking his help when he offered it. Then breakfast would come, and he liked to watch her white hands fluttering amongst the cups, and the graceful way in which she did the honours.

After that they would go round to the farmyard—sparsely populated, it is true—and visit her few pets. Then a game at tennis or a stroll would follow; luncheon, and a dreary dinner; and then in the evenings the hired piano would be opened, and they would pass hours together trying over the new songs he bought for her, varying it with choice bits of Handel or Mozart. And while she played or

sang, he would watch her, and weave rosy web of dreams for their future.

There was only one thing that annoyed him, and that was the rather constant appearance of Roger Cleveland at the Court; and in the park and grounds, like the proverbial bad shilling, he was always turning up when not wanted, and proved a regular Marplot to Cherton.

"So the widow Cleveland still lives at the Cottage?" he remarked one day after a visit from Roger the previous evening.

"Yes."

"Does the Squire find her a good tenant?"

"In what way?"

"Does she pay her rent?"

"Yes."

"To the exact day?"

"No—o. She is generally late with it!"

"So I thought."

"Why?" with an inquiring look at him.

"Because that scapegrace of a son of hers helps himself pretty freely to all her superfluous coin if the poor woman has any."

"How do you know?"

"I have been told so by several people."

"Taken the trouble to inquire?" said Pansy, with a laugh. "How jealous you men are of each other!"

"Yes, I am jealous of him!" he acknowledged. "He is far too often here to please me!"

"No one else comes!" she remarked, half apologetically.

"A good thing too. One of his sort is quite enough!"

"Cherton, you are becoming a perfect bear!"

"I feel like one where you are concerned," he said, bending towards her and opening his arms, "and should like to give you a hug." And before she could stop him he caught her to him and pressed a kiss on her lips.

"How dare you?" she cried, as he released her, stamping her little foot.

"Why shouldn't I?" he asked, gaily. "It seems like only yesterday that I used to carry you pig-a-back, and that you used to reward me with a kiss, and gave me one at meeting and partings too!"

"I was a child then."

"True, and you are a woman now, and deny me the kisses, worse luck! But don't be angry with me, Pansy, for kissing you!" he said softly, taking one of her reluctant hands in his.

"I am—very."

"You must not be!"

"Why, pray? Surely I have the right to resent an impertinence?"

"Don't call it that!" he cried, turning as though she had struck him. "It can't be that from me to you!"

"Indeed! Why not?" she asked, with a touch of surprise.

"Because, in the first place, we are cousins," he returned, cautiously feeling his way.

"They are privileged people. Then we were playmates, and used to embrace tenderly a long time ago when you were a nice little girl; and, thirdly, we may some day be a great deal more to each other than we are now."

"Cherton, you are talking nonsense!" she said, quickly, flushing.

"No, Pansy, I am not. Has it never occurred to you, sweetheart," calling her by his pet childhood's name, that he had loved in his boyhood, "that we might become nearer and dearer to each other—learn to love deeply, truly, lastingly?"

"No!" she murmured, with downcast lids.

"Then will you think of it now? Will you try to grow to care for me very much, as a woman should for the man who will be her husband?" He pressed the hands he held tenderly as he spoke, but she maintained a shy silence.

"Don't you think you could care for me, dear?" he went on, his voice trembling slightly.

"I—I—hardly know!" she faltered.

"Am I distasteful to you?"

"Oh, no! Cherton, you know you are not!"
 "Then if you try, perhaps the deeper feeling will come. Tell me at the end of a month how you feel towards me?"

"Yes, I will tell you then."
 "And now will you give me one kiss of your own accord?"

He held out his arms; she hesitated a moment, made a step forward. He was just drawing her to him, her lips upraised to his, when the door opened, and Cookson ushered in Miss Topsy Weldon, as they started apart like guilty things!

"How glad I am to find you in!" exclaimed that young lady gaily, for she was sincerely attached to Pansy, and revered her as being one of a class to which she, with her plebeian birth, despite her money, could not aspire.

"And I to see you," returned Miss Churchill, struggling with her embarrassment, and striving to appear easy and natural in her manner to this girl, for whom she had a sincere liking, because she was so thoroughly unaffected, so unspoiled despite her wealth, and many admirers and toadies. Only when a woman is not sure if she has been seen in the embrace of a man, it is a trifle hard to appear cool.

"I thought you would be out this fine afternoon!"

"No, I was out with my cousin this morning. You knew Captain Saxby, I think. Cherton, you remember Miss Weldon?"

"Certainly I do! Only I thought she seemed to have forgotten me," he declared nonchalantly, to hide his cousin's confusion.

"You had your back to the light," said Topsy. "So you must forgive my not recognising you. I, of course, should know you anywhere. You haven't changed much since I saw you last."

"You flatter me, Miss Topsy, since I am several months older than when we last met."

"Months don't make much difference to a man when he is in his prime."

"Oh, really, I am overwhelmed!"
 "What affectation!"

"Not a bit, I assure you. Now, for instance, my cousin never pays me compliments," with a glance at Pansy, whose cheeks were rather white, "only snubs me."

"Cherton!" she exclaimed reproachfully, looking up and meeting his glance, and the lilies gave place to roses.

"Truth, coz. You know you do."
 "I am not aware of it."

"Didn't you only this afternoon?" he queried in low tones meant only for her ears, and had the satisfaction of seeing her lids droop.

"Topsy," she said, turning away from him, "won't you send away the carriage, and stay for a few games of tennis?"

"Thanks. I should like it immensely. It is such a splendid day for it—still, bright, not too hot."

"Then I will send Cookson to tell your coachman to give a message to Mr. Weldon," and she left the room, and a few moments later the splendid carriage, with its pair of bay horses the result of success in nauts, drove off, and Miss Churchill returned.

"You must lend me a pair of shoes."

"Yes, mine will fit you!"

"And a broad-brimmed hat."

"Afraid of your complexion?" put in Saxby.

"Of course I am," she acknowledged, with a satisfied peep at her pink and white face in the big girandole opposite.

"Do you wonder?"

"No, I do not. It is not every one who can boast such strawberries and cream."

"What a horrible simile!" she declared, making a move, as she put on the great, cart-wheel like straw hat Pansy had brought her, and stepped through the French window on to the trim, velvety lawn, smooth and even as a billiard ball, which was the only part of the grounds which could lay claim to being really well-kept.

"I think them very nice!" retorted Cherton.
 "So do I—to eat. But fancy having a mottled kind of skin like a preparation of mashed strawberries and cream!"

"I did not mean that you—" he began, and then stopped, for sauntering across the lawn to join them was Roger Cleveland, looking handsomer and more romantic than ever in a new velvet coat and sombrero-like hat.

"May I play, too, Miss Churchill?" he asked, as he joined them, and shook hands.

"Of course," she assented, though in truth she was hardly well-pleased at his arrival, remembering that request of his for a private interview, which, somehow or the other, she did not now feel nearly so much inclined to grant as she did some weeks ago; nor to encounter the gaze of his passionate eyes, especially as she was in Topsy's confidence, and knew she was head over ears in love with this Adonis.

"I shall not be in the way?" with a graceful, airy wave of the hand.

"Not at all. Go over and do your best to help Miss Weldon to beat us," she ordered, with a pretty assumption of imperiousness which he obeyed, though he fumed inwardly. However, he managed before he left to whisper—

"When am I to see you alone? I have been waiting eagerly, expecting to hear from you."

"I—I—don't—know, can't tell," she faltered, covered with confusion. "That is—will you wait longer?"

"I will wait years," he returned, in passionate tones, "if only you will answer me I wish at last!" and then he was obliged to go to escort Miss Weldon to her big, brand-new home, where everything smacked of money and lack of breeding, and nothing, save the girl herself, was pleasant or refined enough to suit his fastidious taste; and after they left Pansy and Churchill strolled back to the Court in silence, and were both very pre-occupied during dinner, and did not sing together in the evening according to their usual custom.

Indeed, in the weeks that followed a strange constraint was on both, and kept them apart, and did not favour Cherton's wooing. Not that he could do much to help it on, for he had told her he would expect her answer on a certain day, and that was the twenty-first of June, her birthday.

On that day the Squire after congratulating her affectionately, and giving her a handsome present, which, by the way, his nephew had provided, told her he wished to see her in the library, and thither she went shortly after breakfast, feeling that a crisis in her life was at hand. Still, she was hardly prepared for what she did hear, and her face turned so white, as the Squire told her of the terms of her grandfather's will, that she looked as though she was going to faint.

"I am all right," she said, in a hoarse tone, refusing his proffered help, and grasping the back of a chair with both hands so tightly that the nails looked bloodless from the extreme tension, "but I will never, never marry Cherton. I understand all now. He can take our old home, turn us out if he likes, still, he cannot make me marry him."

"You are mistaken," cried the Squire, hurriedly. "If you refuse him he loses everything, and, like yourself, will only receive a hundred a year."

"No wonder he tried to get me to pledge my word to him before I knew this," she said bitterly, "and secure to himself a fine fortune. Only he has failed. I will not marry him, and so he will lose all."

"Pansy, don't say that," groaned Mr. Churchill.

"Why not?" she demanded haughtily.

"Because," he returned, shading his face with his hand, "you must not decide rashly until you have heard all. I wanted to spare you, and hoped Cherton would have been agreeable to you as a husband, and that matters could have been amicably arranged."

"What do you mean?" she asked coldly,

yet with a sinking heart, for there was something in her father's manner that boded ill.

"In the first place, he will not suffer as you will, for his mother is well off, and he has his pay. His income, though nothing in comparison to what it would be as master of North Court, will still be very comfortable, and—"

"Don't call him master of North Court," she cried; "and as to the money, what do I care for it?"

"You must live, dear child."

"I am young, and strong, and I can work."

"True, but I am old and feeble," removing his hand from before his ashen face, "and I cannot work."

"Father, what do you mean?" she queried in terror.

"That I shall soon be homeless."

"You have the Court."

"My difficulties are too great to let me remain here. I must find a tenant for it, and pass the remnant of my days in poor lodgings."

"You shall not, dad!" she cried passionately, springing forward and twining her arms round him, "while you have me."

"What can you do, Pansy?"

"I can work."

"That will only keep me in rooms, not here," sadly shaking his head.

"How much will free you from your difficulties?" she demanded gravely, some wild idea of being able to make it and present it to him crossing her mind.

"Ten thousand pounds."

"Ten thousand, father! What a large sum!"

"True. There is no hope for me, save one. No person who can help me save one."

"And that is—"

"Cherton Saxby."

"How has he this power?" she asked in low tones, after a pause, while the dusky red glowed in either cheek.

"If he married you, on your wedding day he would come into some property in London that would sell for that amount—that is, of course, with your consent, as everything would be as much yours as his—and then he could pay my creditors and free me from this debt, that clings round my throat like a millstone, and is killing me."

"Father, don't!" she whispered, drawing his grey head down to her breast, and soothing him. "Is there no other way to free the old home?"

"None!"

"Could you not borrow the money?"

"It is too large a sum, and no one would lend it to me now," with a wan smile at the thought of the hooky-nosed, importunate tribe, who would not have lent him a penny to save their lives, or at any rate, to save his.

"Would it pain you to lose the Court—to leave it?" she whispered.

"I think it would kill me!" he answered, despairingly. "And then think," he went on rapidly, "how miserable your lot will be when I die!"

"Don't, dad!" she said again, pressing him closely in her strong, young arms, "I can't bear it."

"Still you must look this matter full in the face," he returned, firmly—more firmly than he had yet spoken. "In the natural course of events I cannot live much longer, and trouble and worry will probably put an end to my existence soon."

"You would be at rest as far as money matters are concerned," she said, slowly and heavily, "if I were married to Cherton Saxby?"

"I should, my love, be quite at rest, and happy too if I thought you cared for him?"

"Then—I will—marry—him!"

"My dear, dear child!" embracing her.

"That is, I will take his name; I will wear his ring, but we must be as strangers to each other!"

"Pansy!"

"That is my decision!"

"I fancied once you cared for him me

than you would if you looked on him only as a cousin."

"I did care for him very, very much, and might have grown to love him dearly, only my feelings have altered since it has come to my knowledge that he has the power to rob me of my inheritance."

"Pansy, be just. It is not his doing. Try to think kindly of him. Believe me he is a noble fellow!"

"Dad, it is useless," she said, wearily. "I cannot think of him as I used. I will marry him; is that not enough?" and as she spoke, before her eyes passed a vision of Roger Cleveland's handsome face, and though she had never really cared about him, now that she could by no possibility marry him, she began to think he was ill-used, had a right to her affection, and deluded herself into the idea that she was fond of him.

"I should like you to be happy."

"I shall never be that now," with a deep sigh.

"Try to be, or I shall feel that you are sacrificing too much for me."

"I could not do that. Nothing would be too much of a sacrifice for me to do for you," she declared, kissing him warmly in the loyalty of her affection.

"And you will see him?" he asked, anxiously.

"Of course. Whenever he wishes," and then, with a last embrace she left him, going away full of pride, wrath, and indignation against the man she had promised to wed.

CHAPTER IV.

"Thou rising sun, thou blue rejoicing sky,
Yes, everything that is and will be free,
Bear witness for me, where'er ye be,
With what deep worship I have still adored
The spirit of divinest liberty."

That evening Cherton Saxby stood by one of the long French windows in the drawing-room, awaiting the coming of the woman who was to be his wife.

He was pale, and his blue eyes were clouded, for he had heard from his uncle something of her reluctance to wed him under existing circumstances, and as he had grown to love her passionately, he was hardly well pleased at the turn of affairs. Still he hoped to soothe her ruffled feelings, and win her love by-and-by, when they were married.

He little knew, alas! the storm of indignation against him that raged in her heart, how hardened she was against him, how changed.

"You wished to see me?"

The cold tones of her voice struck ominously on his ear, and he turned with a start, and found her standing a little way off, as though to show him he must keep his distance.

"Yes, I wish to see you," he said, slowly looking at her intently, and taking in all the beauty of her face and form.

She was deathly pale, not a vestige of colour about her face; even the lips were white, and her great panny eyes shone out in startling contrast, lit by an angry light. She wore a long, black velvet dress, one of his mother's presents, unrelieved by any ornaments or lace frilling, and looked more lovely than he had ever seen her.

"Will you briefly tell me what you wish to say?"

"As briefly as I can," he answered, shortly, rather nettled. "You have heard the terms of our grandfather's will?"

"Yes, I know that you have the power to rob me of my just inheritance."

"That is hardly fair, any one—"

"We need not discuss that part of the matter," she said, coldly; "nothing we can say will undo the will."

"No. I understand you say you will marry me?"

"I have said that I will take your name for

my father's sake, to secure his dearly-loved home to him, on condition that—on our wedding-day you give me, or rather help me to raise—so that I can give it to him—ten thousand pounds."

"I have told the Squire that he shall have that sum to free him from his liabilities."

"Kind of you to promise what is not yours to give," she sneered, tauntingly.

"It is partly mine," he returned, with wonderful forbearance, considering that he was smarting from a sense of her injustice, and wretched at the overthrow of his hopes.

"I wonder you admit that."

"I will admit anything if it will soften your heart towards me," he cried.

"Nothing will do that," she declared, firmly.

"Don't you see, when you are my wife, his anxiety about your future will be at rest. Believe me if I could relieve his necessities in any other way I would not ask you to become my wife, as it is disagreeable to you."

"We need not trouble each other much. We can be a husband and wife *à la mode*; you living at one end of the house, I at the other. That will suit you?"

"No, it will not suit me!" thundered Cherton, stamping beyond control, "for I love you with my whole heart and soul, and would have you care for me as much in return. But since you wish it, since I cannot leave you free to give your hand with your affection to some fellow luckier than myself, I will marry you, and our lips shall never meet, our hands never touch, no word of love from me trouble you. You shall be as free as though I did not exist, save that sometimes you will have to put up with my society, let me live under the same roof with you to silence chattering tongues, and keep censorious people from guessing our miserable secret—our loveless marriage."

"That arrangement meets with my full approval," she said, regarding him rather fixedly. "We shall be as strangers; we need pretend to no spurious affection for each other!"

"No."

"The Court will have a mistress, and you will be its master!"

"Yes."

After that one outburst of outraged feeling he grew at once.

"The bargain is complete?"

"Not quite. When the ring is on your finger you can say that. By the way, I have bought a betrothal ring for you—emeralds. It is said they insure true love," with a bitter laugh, as he thought of the pride and joyful anticipations in which he had indulged when he bought it. "Let me put it on; or will you take it?" He put it in her hand, and with a slight movement she flung it back, and it fell at his feet.

"I will wear no ring of yours, no sign of my bondage till I am obliged to," she retorted haughtily.

"So be it," he said, picking it up and replacing it in the case. "You won't be able very long to do so, as you know by the terms of the will we must be man and wife within a month from to-day."

"I know."

"Then supposing we fix this day three weeks. Will that suit you?"

"Have it when you please," she answered, with aggravating indifference. If it must be done, she thought, the sooner the better.

"Then we settle on that date. I will tell your father and my mother, and my solicitors will prepare such deeds and papers as are necessary for the raising of the money for the Squire. I need not detain you any longer," he added, coolly, and held the door open wide for her to pass through, which she did, without vouchsafing him a single glance.

The wedding morning dawned bright and glowing, a regular summer day, with the sky intensely blue and cloudless, and all nature decked in its fairest garb.

To poor Pansy the beauty of earth and sky

seemed to mock her anguish. The gold glint of the corn, the blaze of colour in the garden, the jubilant singing of the feathered choristers, the waving of the verdant leaves, was all mockery. There was no joy in her proud, sore heart, only sorrow and humiliation.

She was wild to think she must marry in this fashion, and a man who was treating her as Cherton had during the past three weeks. He had not addressed a dozen words to her, and sent any communication by his mother or his lawyer.

Still, her wrath and indignation were useless, and with a sigh she turned from the window, as her aunt entered the room, and passively let herself be decked in her bridal finery.

Poor Pansy! All the time they were arraying her she was thinking of the old dear days of childhood, when she was perfectly happy, and thought Cherton perfection; and, in spite of her pride, the tears welled to her eyes, and a great drop splashed on to Mrs. Saxby's hand.

"Control yourself, my love," she murmured.

"Aunt, is there no escape? I am so miserable!" she returned, in the same low tones.

"It is too late to draw back," said her aunt, firmly. "Have courage. Think of your father."

"Oh! Pansy, how lovely you look!" exclaimed Topsy Weldon, coming in just then with a big bouquet of white roses for the bride.

"Do I?" said the girl, flatteringly, looking at her reflection in the long glass, and hardly seeing the shimmering white silk, the costly pearls that encircled her throat and arms, the veil that shrouded her like a mist of silvery threads, the orange blossoms crowning her head; her beauty, which was pale, like the Lily Maid of Aesholot.

"Lucky girl!" went on her thoughtless friend. "How I wish I stood in your shoes!"

"How I wish you did!" muttered the bride.

"I mean, of course," rattled away Topsy, "with a different bridegroom!" and she thought of handsome Roger, and sighed.

But her gloom departed quickly, and she was quite radiant when she stood, with a bevy of other pretty girls at the altar, just behind Pansy, conscious that Cleveland, who was among the guests, was eyeing her admiringly.

The solemn words the clergyman uttered fell dully on the girl's ears. She hardly seemed to realise that she was being married, and stood motionless, like a marble statue, and as colourless, while the ceremony went on that bound her for all time to Cherton Saxby. He was perfectly self-possessed, and gave no sign of the exultation that made his heart leap as he looked at his fair bride, and felt that now she was his own, whether she loved him or not, and that nothing could part them.

His responses were made firmly, hers in low, dreamy tones; and all the while her eyes were fixed on the white roses, and she was wondering how soon they would fade and die. When he took her hand and put the gold circlet on, and then the rejected emeralds, he felt her shrink away, and a shiver of repugnance shake her, and his face flushed and his brows contracted.

He had his revenge for that shudder later on. After they had signed the register in the vestry he lifted her veil and kissed her. For a moment her eyes blazed, the hot colour rushed to her face, she clenched her hands; and then, remembering with a sense of shame and defeat creeping over her that he had the right to do it, and that she must not make a scene before all the assembled guests, she quietly took his arm, and with down-drooped head and flagging step walked beside him down the aisle to the carriage. She shrank into the furthest corner and turned her head away from him, and he did not attempt to caress her or utter a word until they were in the dainty little room at the Court, which had been fitted up as a boudoir for her. Then he took the bouquet from her languid grasp, and, holding her

two cold hands in his, said, "Pansy! try to look happy for a short time; shake off this depression. In a few moments all our friends will be here. We must preside at the breakfast. Don't let them guess the truth, now in the first hours of our wedded life!"

"It is not a wedding, simply the carrying out of a bargain!" she returned, holding her head regally erect.

"Let there be peace between us. Wife, have pity on my great love for you!" he pleaded.

"Don't call me that!" she cried, wrenching her hands free.

"You are that to me now. Nothing can alter it. Mine against the whole world!"

"In name only. An empty mockery," she returned, bitterly.

"You mistake, he said, firmly. "You are legally mine. You owe me obedience. I can insist on your submission."

"Try to make me submit, and see what I will do," she exclaimed, passionately. "Obedient to you, indeed!"

"Yes, to me. Your first duty is to me."

"My first duty is to my father, and you have not given me those deeds and papers which it will be my joy to give him to free him from his troubles. Please give them to me now. I have sacrificed myself for them."

"Pansy!" he began, gravely, putting his hands on her shoulders and keeping them there, though he felt she shrank from the contact, "do you know that I need not give them to you?"

"Why not?" she demanded, imperiously.

"Because the contract is not fulfilled. While you defy me you are not morally my wife."

"Do you refuse to give them to me?" she asked, turning so deathly white he thought she would faint.

"What if I do?" he queried, gazing steadily into the defiant purple eyes.

"If you do I will publish this miserable, sordid motive for our wretched marriage far and near. I will not appear at the breakfast. I will not go one step with you on this wedding journey which has been planned to throw dust in the eyes of the world. I will stay here, shut myself up in one room, if need be, never see you, never speak to you. Do you like the plan?"

"No, I do not," he returned, with a harsh laugh, dropping his hands from her shoulders. "And as the Squire's feelings must be studied, and you seem to have forgotten them, I yield. Here are the deeds," taking several papers from a cabinet, and handing them to her. "And now permit me to lead you to the breakfast," and arm-in-arm these twain, who had been made one, went into the gathering of friends and relatives with anger against each other in their hearts.

The breakfast was magnificent, the guests merry, the bridegroom feverishly gay. Only the bride was cold, and white and silent, and moved like one in a dream when Mrs. Saxby told her it was time to go and don the pretty heliotrope travelling costume.

She did not rally even under Topsy's gay badinage, and clung to her father convulsively at parting, twining her arms round him again and again, and at last only being induced to enter the carriage by a whispered word of warning from her aunt.

At last she was in, seated beside her groom. The door was slammed to, and away started the four greys as hard as they could to North-down station, followed by a volley of rice and satin slippers.

"She doesn't care for that fellow, I'll lay my bottom dollar," muttered Roger, following the carriage with his eyes. "I wonder whether she would have looked happier if I were at her side? But of course it wouldn't have done for me to go in there, as she wasn't an heiress. I must marry money. She is lovely, though. I shall never care for any other woman as I do for her," and heaving a sigh for the 'might-have-beens,' he went into the Court, and delighted Topsy by paying her the most devoted attentions for the rest of the day.

CHAPTER V.

"Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?
Or my cheeks make pale with care,
'Cause another's rosy are?
Be she fairer than the day,
Or the flowery meads in May—
If she be not so to me,
What care I how fair she be?"

HALF-AN-HOUR later Chertton and Pansy were in the train, speeding away towards London. She reclined in one corner of the carriage, he in the other.

Both displayed an immense amount of indifference. Perhaps hers was more real than his, though he seemed to be chiefly interested in the *Field*. However, he cast many furtive glances over the top of his paper at his silent companion, who looked distractingly pretty despite her pallor and the weary droop of her mouth.

He offered her the *Times*. She took it and threw it down; then he pretended to doze, apparently oblivious of her presence.

"Tired?" he asked, with a prodigious yawn, after a while.

"Horribly tired," she returned, in languid tone, with closed eyes.

"Slow this, isn't it?" he went on, with another yawn.

"Awfully," she agreed, coolly.

"Wish we could get something to eat to pass the time."

"You should have provided a hamper to satisfy your cravings," she said, sarcastically.

"Yes. Sorry I didn't think of it. However, we stop at Carna fifteen minutes. I shall be able to fortify the inner man there."

"Yes."

"Can I get you anything?" he asked, with elaborate carelessness when the train stopped.

"Nothing, thanks," she responded, coldly. Nevertheless he appeared in two or three minutes with a cup of tea and some bread-and-butter, which he insisted on her taking, and which she was secretly only too glad to have, as she had not tasted a thing that day.

"Feel better now?" he queried, cavalierly, when they were once more flying on through the ripening cornfields.

"I have not felt ill," she said, haughtily.

"No, only you looked tired out, ready to faint."

"I should think you would find studying the landscape more interesting than studying me."

"Perhaps I might," he agreed, with aggravating nonchalance, turning his back on her; and then there was a silence, broken after a while by a sob.

"Pansy, you are crying," he exclaimed, and in a moment was at her side.

"You are mistaken," said the girl, coldly, turning her pale, lovely face, with its wistful eyes, to him.

"I don't think I was," he remarked, dubiously. "I wish you would let me comfort you," he went on, tenderly. "Can't we be friends—if nothing more?"

"There can be no friendship between you and me," was the haughty retort, and then she stared out at the country over which night was beginning to throw her pall; but he did not move, and presently he saw her lean back against the cushions with an air of fatigue, and then gradually her head drooped until it reclined on his shoulder.

He did not stir, remaining perfectly still. He had no wish to disturb her. It was charming to him to feel her there close to him, to have her leaning, as it were, on his strength. Only when an awkward lurch woke her, and she jerked her head away angrily, and sat very erect, he felt angry, and sore, and miserable; and felt that he was sat upon, relapsing into a sullen silence, which lasted until they reached London. Then he helped her to alight with his usual courtesy, and, leaving his man to look after the luggage, called a

hansom, and drove off to the charming little house in Park-lane that Mrs. Saxby had secured for them for the rest of the season.

A late dinner was ready for them, prepared and appointed in such style that it ought to have gained words of approval from the most fastidious, but Chertton Saxby and his bride spoke never a syllable, and neither did justice to the many good things which loaded the table.

Afterwards he lit a cigar, and suggested that they should go into the pretty drawing-room, of which they had caught a glimpse as they passed through the hall, and have some music; but she declined, and soon left the room, going up to her own apartments.

He followed her while in sight with longing eyes, and then solaced himself as he best could with cigars and brandy-and-soda, and about midnight followed his bride's example, and went upstairs.

He sought Pansy's room, and felt an odd thrill of annoyance as he saw how she shrank back at the sight of him, trembling.

"I have come to say good-night!" he explained, holding out his hand.

"Have you?" she murmured, shrinking still further from him, for his face was flushed, and in his eyes was blazing a look of baffled passion.

"Won't you even shake hands?" he queried, after a pause, reproachfully.

"If you wish it," she said, reluctantly, and in an instant both her hands were clasped in his, and he was holding them clenched against his breast. "Let me go!" she cried, angrily, striving to free herself.

"Pansy, have you no pity?" he pleaded.

"None for you!"

"How can you be so hard? Think of my love for you!"

"It never existed! Why do you harp on that string? Our marriage was a bargain, nothing more! Keep your part of the contract, I will keep mine."

"I cannot! It is too hard; for I do love you with all my soul!" and then he drew her swiftly to him, and rained down passionate kisses on lip, and cheek, and brow.

"Coward!" she panted, wrenching herself out of his arms, and standing before him with glittering eyes and ashen cheeks. "Coward, to take a mean advantage of me! How dare you? How dare you insult me?"

"Pansy!" he exclaimed, amazed at the fury that possessed her, trying to take her hands to soothe her.

"Don't touch me! Stand aside! You have no right here! These rooms, at least, are mine, and should be sacred from your intrusion!" and, eluding him by a quick movement, she gained the dressing-room, and shut the door in his face, looking it as she did so.

"Very well; so be it," he muttered, his face growing as white as hers. "Since you are obdurate and merciless, I will meet you with your own weapons!" and turning, he left the room, with a miserable sense of defeat on him, despite that he held the whip-hand, and had the power, to a certain extent, to control her actions.

Hasband and wife did not meet after that stormy scene for some days. She pleaded indisposition, and kept her room; and he did not again intrude his presence on her, only sent a polite message of inquiry as to her health every morning by the French maid; and went out amongst his friends and acquaintances, and concocted a pretty little fiction as to his wife's illness, wherewith to stop their wagging tongues and curious glances, under which he withered and smarted, though he gave no sign of it.

Towards the end of the week she grew tired of this self-imposed imprisonment, and telling Toinette to get out a pretty dress, declared herself well enough to go down to dinner, and submitted herself to the skilful foreigner's hand to have her hair dressed and her form robed.

While this was going on the astute Gaul kept up a running commentary of praises

about her master's personal appearance. He was "*tres belle*," "*magnifique*," "*de jolie taille*," &c., &c., indulging in remarks with a freedom an English servant would not have ventured on.

Pansy listened in silence, and after her toilette was completed, went slowly down the staircase to the pretty room she had not yet put foot in. She paused an instant outside the door, and then, summoning all her courage, turned the handle swiftly, and entered. She need not have hesitated, however, for her husband was not there, and she felt half relieved at his not being present, and yet unconsciously angry—why, she knew not. A quarter of an hour went by, which she spent looking at all the dainty trifles strewn about, and furtively watching the door, which was at last thrown open by the butler, a stately individual with white hair, and a vinous complexion, who announced that dinner was on the table.

"But Captain Saxby has not returned!" said Pansy.

"The Captain dines at Sir Clifford Hunter's to-night, madam," returned the white-headed man, in a dignified manner.

"Oh, yes, of course! I had forgotten," she muttered, an angry flush suffusing her cheek at this *exposé* of her ignorance of her bridegroom's movements; and she went in, dined alone in solitary state, and went to bed and wept. Such is the nature of woman!

The next morning she enjoyed, or rather did not enjoy, a solitary breakfast, and was preparing to take luncheon alone, when the door opened, and Cherton came in.

She flushed at the sight of him, and instinctively drew up her slender throat, but he bowed courteously, and asked if she felt better?

"Yes, thanks!" she replied, trying to emulate his coolness.

"I daresay the heat upset you!" he went on, scanning the newspaper.

"Very likely!"

"Will you take anything now?" she ventured, after a pause, that was awkward to her at any rate.

"Thanks! A little chicken. Oh! don't trouble, pray!" as she made a movement towards the bell, "I will ring it," and he did, and gave the order to Carter to bring another plate, &c.

She was just a trifle annoyed to think that everything should be so well appointed in the house, and no thanks to her—the meals well-cooked, well-served, and with strict punctuality, whether there was anyone to enjoy them or no. The servants were certainly well-trained, and knew their business.

"Carter, give Mrs. Saxby a glass of that Madeira. It will do you good," he said authoritatively, as she made a movement of refusal, and when it was poured out she drank it meekly.

"There are a whole sheaf of invitations up there," he remarked coolly, pointing at the mantel shelf when luncheon was finished, as he lit a cigar, and commenced to peruse a sporting paper. "You had better look over them, and see if there are any you care to accept, unless you mean to live a life of seclusion like a nun, and renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world!"

"I don't mean to do anything of the sort," she retorted, a trifle sharply. "Why should I?"

"I know of no reason," he said, nonchalantly, without looking up, "I thought you might imagine one!"

"I don't exercise my imagination in that way!" she answered, coldly.

"Glad to hear it. You may be that *rare avis* a sensible woman, without fads or nonsense!"

"I hope I am."

"So do I, cordially!"

"Are there any of these you wish me to refuse?" she asked diplomatically, feeling they were getting on dangerous ground.

"None!" he answered with the utmost

indifference, "You can accept anything you like, and refuse anything you don't like without reference to me!"

"Am I to understand from that speech?" she asked with a haughtiness which she assumed to hide her chagrin, "that you do not mean to appear with me in society, or accompany me anywhere?"

"By no means. You bear my name. I should wish to shield that from scandal. We must appear together sometimes for the sake of *les convenances*, but of course, there are many entertainments and places you can go to alone, without being bored by my obnoxious presence, and as you said, we can be a husband and wife *à la mode*."

"I see," she said, slowly, hardly liking this Roland for her Oliver, and gathering up the invitations she prepared to depart to her own rooms.

"There is a victoria at your disposal if you feel inclined to drive to-day, or at any time. If you give Carter the order it will come round for you."

"Thanks. I should like to this afternoon."

"Very well; drive in the park, and at half-past six I will be at Albert gate. If you will pick me up there we can take a turn or two for the edification and benefit of our friends—or rather, our enemies, unless it will be too much for you."

"Not at all. I will be at the Albert gate at the time you name."

And she was; and angry against her though he was, he could not but notice how many admiring glances followed her, and what a sensation she created. She was all in white, with a great broad-brimmed hat loaded with snowy plumes; and her beautiful face, without a vestige of colour, and the great purple eyes were shown off by this setting.

When the carriage drew up by the railings a perfect crowd of men came up and begged to be introduced to his wife.

He performed the introductions with very good grace, and played the part of a newly-married man admirably.

Once launched on the waves of the world of fashion, Pansy entered with feverish gaiety into every detail of the giddy, endless round of society. There was no limit to her caprices, nor to her extravagances, and Cherton bit his lips in silence over the heavy bills that came in. Her costly and *recherché* dresses were the talk of the town; the beauty of her thoroughbred Arab and the pair of greys that drew her victoria in place of the sober bay mare with which she had started. Then her entertainments were perfect; small, of course, because the band-box house in Park-lane would not hold many, but nothing was lacking to make the dinners and at homes successful. A French cook, good wines, splendid fruit, first-rate music, pretty women, handsome men, all were to be found at lovely Mrs. Saxby's.

She was acknowledged to be the beauty of the year; the rage poets raved about; painters limned her; statesmen courted her; even nobility sought her out and favoured her with attentions.

Wildly she plunged into every distraction, theatres, operas, fancy-balls, dinners, luncheons, picnics, boating excursions, races, Hurlingham, Skindles; everywhere she appeared, sometimes with her husband, more often without. Still, she never lacked an escort or a chaperon.

Men were always ready to pay her attention, and women, even the most exclusive, to accompany her if she wished it.

Cherton looked on outwardly unmoved, while his young wife was *fêted*, and caressed, and flattered to the top of her bent; only in his secret soul he did not like it, and was casting about for an excuse to suggest a departure from town. He was urged on into doing this by something he heard one night at a ball at Lady Digby's.

As usual, he was late; as usual, Pansy had arrived with a frisky chaperon only a few years older than herself; as usual, her programme was more than full, and she was

whirling round the room in Roger Cleveland's arms, who had found his way to town, and, by virtue of his handsome face, was warmly welcomed by society, and followed her like a shadow.

"Who is that the beauty is dancing with?" asked one guardsman of another.

"I believe his name is Cleveland!" returned the second. "Report says he was sweet upon her once."

"At any rate, if he wasn't, he is" laughed the first.

"Undoubtedly! He haunts her like a shadow. Does not give another fellow a chance."

"Perhaps she wouldn't, either!"

"Possibly not. She seems to like him!"

"And where is her husband?"

"Oh, knocking about at the clubs and places!"

"Doesn't he care for her?"

"It doesn't look like it. He leaves her to the spoiling of the world, and the tender attentions of Mr. Cleveland, in a very non-chalant fashion."

"Is he mad, or a brute?"

"Neither, my dear fellow! Remember what the *savant* says, 'When women become ours we cease to be theirs.' She is his wife, that is enough."

"I shouldn't think it enough," with a long look at Pansy. "Why, she's lovely—simply lovely!"

"Yes, I pity her with such a face to be neglected by her husband. He must be a fool. There will be dozens of other fellows ready to console her."

"Of course! I'd swell the list gladly," with a half laugh. And then they passed on. But Cherton remained deep in thought, pondering over what he had heard; and the result was that he took her home early, and the next morning commenced to sound her as to leaving town.

"It is very hot!" he remarked, by way of an opening, as he toyed with his coffee-cup, "isn't it?"

"Very," she agreed, laconically.

"Town is beginning to empty!"

"Only just beginning. It still seems full to me!"

"Full of dust and heat," he said, irritably, pushing his chair back, and rising from the table. "The country, I have no doubt, is lovely now."

"I daresay it is," with a little unconscious sigh.

"Would you like to go there, Pansy?"

"I don't mind; just as you like," she replied, with exasperating indifference.

"Don't you care to see the Court and dad again?"

"I should like to see dad again!"

"You don't care about the Court, your home?"

"I could hardly look upon it as my home now. The one I love is not there!"

"True," returned her husband, controlling his annoyance at her insinuation of dislike of him. "Still he is not far from it. The Dover House is only fifteen minutes' walk from the Court. You could see him every day."

"Could I?"

"Of course! The housekeeper from here can go with us. You need have no household cares to tie you. You will have perfect freedom and liberty!"

"Your mother may want his society!"

"Oh! mother is accustomed to being by herself. What shall we do? Shall we arrange to start for Northdown early next week?"

"Yes," she assented, listlessly.

"Would you rather remain in town?"

"No, I have no choice." And then to close the discussion she went out of the room, and getting her maid to attire her in a dream of a dress, all lace and mauve ribbons, went to a garden party at Mrs. Leyton's, and was quickly surrounded by a crowd of admirers, while her husband lounged off to one of his numerous clubs, and tried to solace himself with masquerade society, to banish the blues, that had such

a grip of him, by smoking and billiard-playing, and drinking lead soda-and-brandy in an unlimited kind of fashion that made his friends stare.

CHAPTER VI.

THE days passed heavily and wearily to Pansy after her return to North Court. She was well provided for; had every luxury and comfort woman could wish, and yet she often thought how much rather she would have had the dinner of herbs, and a little love to season it, than all these dainties and the wretched indifference that reigned at her sumptuously-appointed table.

One bright day, towards the close of October, she set out for her usual walk, accompanied by Fidget, and, after chafing to, and consoling with, one or two old rheumatic women in the village, passed on towards the shore.

"Be ye goin' round the bluff to day?" called out one of the cronies.

"Yes," she nodded.

"Then be careful an' dinna linger to long. It's a spring tide to afternoon, and there will be na ganging back after four, and to wind's arising."

"I will be careful," she answered, and then went on over the smooth yellow sand, walking as close to the sea as she could, watching the waves rush in, and then recede, leaving a foamy mark behind.

It was a splendid day, sunshiny and clear, with a wind that seemed to threaten freshening. Sand-pipers and gulls were flying by, diving and twirling as they waited for the wary fish. Shore larks were twittering, crows sailing up high in the heavens; the sea was deep-blue, each wave with crests of snow, that told of coming turbulence in the ocean.

The sunrays fell on it in a trail of phosphorescent light, that glittered like jewels on the dancing waters. A few cobbles were sailing homeward, otherwise there was not a vessel to be seen.

On she went, on—on, forgetful of the old crone's warning; and when at last a cloud obscuring the sun made a sudden darkness fall around, she turned with a start, and saw the bluff, that stood out over a quarter of a mile, and which she must round to get back to the village, was a long, long way off, and that the sea was looking angry, and the wind getting boisterous.

She at once began to walk back at a smart pace, the dog, giving short, sharp barks, running on before. She kept an anxious eye on the water, and noted that each wave crept further in. She hurried on as fast as she could, but the waters crept in faster, and when she neared the promontory she saw with a sinking heart, a sickening feeling of horror, that the waves were beating with angry violence against its base—that her retreat was cut off!

Wildly she looked about, but there was no escape. The cliffs were over a hundred feet high, and sheer. There was no opening down to the shore for miles; she must try and wade. She advanced, getting her feet wet, and Fidget plunged boldly in, and commenced swimming at once. She saw it was too deep for her to attempt that; she would be at once swept off her feet. The dog stopped, and looked round when he found she did not follow, but with a cry and a gesture she urged him to go on, knowing it was her only chance. If they saw him return alone and met him, they would know what it meant, and send a boat for her. Then she sat down on a rock to wait. For what? Either life or death—a horrible death!

Motionless she remained, staring straight out, straining her eyes to see if the welcome help were coming. The gloom of the early autumn night was beginning to steal over the sea. No help came; she gave herself up for lost, and sat listlessly with head bowed on her breast, wondering if Cherton would care when

he saw her dead body washed ashore, seaweed tangled amid her dusky tresses, her eyes closed, her lips sealed in death!

She felt drowsy and cold, and was giving way to the desire to sleep when the bark of a dog fell on her ear, and the next moment a boat shot round the bluff, and came rapidly towards her. A few moments more it grated on the shore, her husband threw an anchor over, and leapt out, followed by the dripping Fidget.

"Pansy!" he cried, "come quickly; there is not a moment to lose!"

"Have you come alone?" she asked, slowly, not rising.

"Yes. I was on the shore when the dog came round, and the women told me you had come here; the boat was ready, so I jumped in and pulled as hard as I could."

"Why did you trouble?" she asked, dreamily.

"Trouble!" he echoed, in intense surprise. "Child, what are you thinking of? Do you imagine I should leave you to die a horrible death?"

"Would you have cared?" she asked, wistfully.

"Cared!" he cried, passionately, looking at the lovely pale face, "I could not live without you!"

"Cherton! Husband!" she murmured, holding out her arms, and in a moment she leapt in his; and as they gazed into each other's eyes they knew the barrier between them had broken down, that they loved as man and wife should.

"Hurry, dearest!" he urged, after that swift, sweet embrace, helping her into the boat, and, drawing up the anchor, he seized the oars, and commenced pulling vigorously.

He had a terrible battle before him, he knew. The current was running strongly from the village, the wind was high, and the waves boisterous; but he had something new to nerve his arm, to stimulate him to herculean effort, and he fought his way slowly round the bluff, and struggled on. Just as he thought he was safe, getting into smoother water, one of his oars snapped, and he was nearly powerless.

"I can't get on now!" he said, with a groan, looking at Pansy's white face, "I shall pull her right round!" However, he went on, trying to keep her straight. "Help is coming!" he cried, after a few awful minutes. "They have launched the lifeboat; she is coming now!" and so she was.

In a short time Pansy, and Cherton, and the spaniel were safely aboard the lifeboat, and the frail skiff was lashed to her stern, and the hardy fishermen were pulling with might and main towards Northdown.

Roger Cleveland was steering, and had routed the men out, and got the boat launched when he heard of Mrs. Saxby's danger.

Cherton would rather have owed his and his wife's safety to any other; man only he didn't mind it so much when, later on, he learnt Roger meant to make Topsy Weldon Mrs. Cleveland.

"This is our real homecoming, my dearest! my own!" Cherton whispered passionately in Pansy's ear, as he lifted her from the carriage in which they had driven up from the village.

"Yes, Cherton! There is no shadow between us now to darken our love. I was wrong. I mistook my feelings. I loved you all along, only my pride blinded me. Can you forgive me?"

"Darling, need you ask?"

And this answer satisfied her.

[THE END]

COURTSHIP.—A man, to be successful in love, should think only of his sweetheart and himself. An old author observes that lovers are never tired of each other's company, because they are always talking of themselves.

FACETIÆ.

THE bluntest man sometimes makes the most cutting remarks.

WHEN is a lamp in a window like a tombstone? When it is set up for a late husband.

A CONUNDRUM for botanists and theologians: If trees had any religion, what would it naturally be? Buddhism.

A BOY who was told to confine himself to strong physical diet, took to soda water, as he thought that was the most *fiestiest* thing he knew of.

"WHAT is the interior of Africa principally used for?" asked a teacher of the class in geography. "For purposes of exploration," answered the head boy.

"THE prisoner at the bar seems to be a very smooth-looking fellow," said a spectator to the sheriff. "Yes; he was *ironed* just before he was brought in," responded the officer.

WHEW! "I was reading in a medical journal to-day that neuralgia had greatly increased since people discontinued the use of the night-cap." Husband: "If that is so I must order two or three gallons of whiskey at once."

A FELLOW being arrested for selling goods without a license, indignantly demanded why a license is necessary for a man to sell merchandise in this land of liberty, whereupon the magistrate informed him that liberty is not license.

A PRETENTIOUS person was praising a small bottle of wine to Daniel Webster (who was luncheon with him), and descanted at length on the fact that it was over a hundred years old. "It is very little for its age," quietly remarked Webster.

BOSTON LANDLORD (to coloured porter): "See if the gentleman in parlour H have finished discussing their dinner." Porter (having returned from parlour H): "Dey am fru eatin' de dinner, boss, but dey aint done 'cussin' it yet."—*American Paper*.

PORRAGES and irritated traveller to landlord: "Didn't you ever have a gentleman stop with you before?" Landlord (surveying him critically): "Be you a gentleman?" Traveller: "Yes, sir, I am." Landlord: "Then I never had one stop with me before."

A WOMAN hastily stepped up to the driver of a train at Stamford, and screamed out: "Is this the right train?" "Where to?" politely asked the man. "Oh, you fool! Don't you know where you're going?" cried the woman, as the train started, and left her standing on the platform.

I SUPPOSE it is impossible to get anything like a just notion of a toboggan slide except at the Exhibition," said a young girl to a friend. "Oh, yes; if you'd drop some orange peel at the head of the stairs and then step on it, you may get a very good idea of a toboggan slide," was the reply.

A CHURCHYMAN, in winding up a touching funeral discourse, said to the mourning friends: "Be comforted, ye sorrowing ones, there is still a balm in Gilead." The reporter took it down correctly, but when it came out in the newspaper, it read: "Be comforted; ye snoring ones; there is still a barn in Guilford."

A GENTLEMAN travelling in Ireland was driven a long way by a post-boy during a pouring rain. On alighting at a tavern he said to the driver: "Well, my boy, you are pretty wet, are you not?" To which the post-boy responded: "It's not the wet I care for, your honour; but, faith, I'm very dry, an' that's disagreeable."

OLD GENTLEMAN (to his nephew): "I wonder what makes young Dobson so awfully unpopular? He's always seemed a very nice fellow." Nephew: "Yes; but, you see, he writes poetry." Old Gentleman: "Well, that isn't a crime, is it?" Nephew: "But, you see, he insists on reading his poetry to people." Old Gentleman: "He does? That settles it."

SOCIETY.

A COSTLY widow's cap is to be sent to the Queen as a Jubilee gift from the Queen-Regent of Spain. It is made of priceless old Spanish lace, with an embroidered veil at the back hanging almost to the ground, and a pearl diadem in front, the jewels being embroidered on the lace by Queen Christina herself, who is an accomplished needlewoman. The cap is copied from an old portrait which Queen Christina found in the Palace at Madrid, representing a widow of the Spanish Royal House in the gala costume of three centuries ago.

HER MAJESTY has accepted a beautifully embroidered screen from Miss Scott, eldest daughter of Lena Lady Scott; it has four folds embroidered with sprays of the iris, lily, rose and geranium, on pale blue satin, the arrangement and embroidery being the work of Miss Scott. The frame is in the Adams style, painted and enamelled in white and gold, and enriched with carved trellis panels, each fold being surmounted by the crown of England.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES has accepted a fancy table made by the boys in the joinery department of the Boys' Refuge, Strangeways. The table has been made at the stand which the institution has at the Manchester Royal Exhibition, where the boys in all the industrial departments are to be seen at work.

HER MAJESTY's second State ball will take place at Buckingham Palace on Wednesday, July 6, and the second State concert on Friday, July 15.

LADY WILLIS held a large reception at Government House, Portsmouth, in honour of the Queen's birthday. Amongst those present were the Mayor and Mayoress of Portsmouth, Colonel Stirling, C.B., and Mrs. Stirling, Admiral and Mrs. Lethbridge, General and the Misses Armstrong, Major and Mrs. Auld, Major-General and Mrs. Bambridge, Admiral and the Misses Chads, Admiral and Mrs. Grieve, the Rev. Canon Jacob, the Rev. R. P. Grant, Sir W. Cusack Smith, Colonel and Mrs. Stavelay Murray, Colonel and Mrs. Newbolt, and Count and Countess Metaxa. All the officers present wore full uniform.

Amongst many effective dresses the following may be mentioned: Lady Willis, dress of electric-blue satin, draped with white lace, diamond stars in hair; Mrs. Playfair, bodice and train of rich crimson brocade, petticoat of crimson satin and black lace; Mrs. Tison, dress of pale electric grey, ornamented with pink aigrettes and small pink roses; Miss Tison, black satin and tulle, with crimson flowers; Miss Brown-Grieve and Miss O'Malley, dresses of rich white silk, with white aigrettes and ribbons; Mrs. Madden, bodice and train of striped black and white velvet, petticoat of white silk, with rows of black lace, diamond ornaments; Mrs. Maitland, dress of cream lace and satin, with knots of pale heliotrope ribbon; Miss G. Langley, dress of rich crimson velvet and écarl lace. The table decorations in the refreshment-room were of dark blue clematis and scarlet geraniums.

THE Annual Tennis Tournament for the championship of Ireland was held in Fitzwilliam-square, Dublin, and was a highly successful one, both for the players and the lookers-on; bright sunshine prevailed during the week, and added much to the gaiety of the scene. The prizes were distributed by H.S.H. Princess Edward of Saxe-Weimar, who, together with the Prince, visited the tournament several afternoons. The Princess was presented with a handsome bouquet upon her arrival, the prevailing colours of which were brown and gold, the colours of the Fitzwilliam Club. Princess Edward was attired in a handsome costume of black tulle, and wore a black bonnet, ornamented with jet.

STATISTICS.

AMERICAN POLICE.—The police department of Philadelphia is composed of 1,456 officers and men; that of New York city, 3,101. The former city has 469 in its fire department; the latter, 1,139.

THE CZAR OF RUSSIA, at his Winter Palace on the banks of the Neva, St. Petersburg, possesses what is probably the largest permanent installation of electric light ever placed in a single building. The palace itself is illuminated by 12,000 incandescent lamps, while fifty-six powerful arcs light up the front and the various courtyards. The machine-room contains eight engines, capable of developing 2,500 horse power; the dynamos, including reserve machines, are twenty-six in number.

THE report of the Deputy Master of the Mint for 1896, which is now issued, states that during the year no gold had been coined, the Mint having been exclusively engaged on silver and bronze coinage, the value of the former being £417,884, and of the bronze coins £51,669. The number of half-crowns coined was 994,752, and of florins 592,020; while the shillings struck amounted to 1,774,080; and the sixpences to 2,724,490 in number. The number of three-penny pieces coined was 6,150,408.

GENS.

IT is impossible to make people understand their ignorance; for it requires knowledge to perceive it; and therefore he that can perceive it, hath it not.

Of all the vanities, the vanity of high birth is the greatest. True nobility is derived from virtue, not from birth. Titles, indeed, may be purchased; but virtue is the only coin that makes the bargain valid.

THE disesteem and contempt of others is inseparable from pride. It is hardly possible to overvalue ourselves but by undervaluing our neighbours.

LET every man take care how he speaks and writes of honest people, and not set down at a venture the first thing that comes uppermost.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SPONGE CAKE.—Take twelve eggs, the weights of the eggs in sugar, half their weight in flour, and the juice and rind (grated) of one lemon. Sponge cake made in this way should be baked in tin the size and shape of a brick.

ORANGE LAYER CAKE.—One cup sugar, one-half cup butter, one-half cup sweet milk, one and a half teaspoonsful of baking-powder, whites of three eggs; flavour to taste; cream butter and sugar; add milk and flour, with baking-powder well sifted with flour, and lastly add whites of eggs well beaten. This will make three good layers. Materials for jelly: Juice of two and rind of one orange, one cup of sugar, one-half cup of water, a pinch of salt, yolks of three eggs, one heaping teaspoonful of corn-flour; boil all together.

CORNUED VEAL.—Take two pounds of lean veal and cut it into small pieces half-an-inch or more square. Now cut an onion into dice, and a tart apple into slices; put the apple and onion into a stewpan with an ounce of butter and a clove of garlic. Then, over a moderate fire, stir them until they become nicely browned; then stir in a tablespoonful of curry-powder and half a tablespoonful of flour. Mix all the ingredients well together, and then pour in a pint of water. Allow the contents to boil up, and then add the pieces of veal, and set the stewpan where they may simmer until they become tender. Then add a little lemon juice and salt, mix all gently together, turn out on a dish, and serve with boiled rice separate.

MISCELLANEOUS.

AN EEL INDUSTRY.—One of the industries along the Shannon River in Ireland is the capture and cultivation of eels. The taking of forty thousand in a single night sometimes occurred years ago; but the present product is much less, owing to the drainage of the country and other influences. At Castle Connell are five immense tanks, in which the eels are kept alive and allowed to grow, the dead and the weak ones being dipped out every morning by means of large landing nets, and sold cheaply to poor people. It is during this fishing process that the inmates of the tanks are seen to the best advantage, for every fin and tail are in motion, swimming upward and downward in one vast living mass. Eels of all ages, sizes, are there. Thousands are there also in the tank, varying in weight from two ounces to twelve pounds. These latter are the well-flavoured, juicy fellows that are converted into the delicious "collared eel," for which Killaloe is so justly famous.

THERE is no tree that is so sure to grow without any care as the willow. A twig from a branch of the tree stuck into the moist earth, and the labour is completed. An article in a German contemporary, which is a great authority, recommends the cultivation of willow trees, not only from an economical and industrial point of view, but also for hygienic purposes. They are especially useful where the drinking water is taken from fountains or natural wells, and still more where there are morasses and meadows; for in the vicinity of willow trees water is always clear and pure. Let those who doubt this fact place a piece of willow which has not yet begun to strike, into a bottle of water, and place this with another bottle containing water only in a warm room for eight days; in the first bottle will be found shoots and rootlets in clear water, while the other bottle will contain putrefying water. Holland is covered with willows, and their dam works are made stronger by the net-work formed by the roots.

DAINTY ECONOMY.—An art magazine recently described a house of the humblest sort, poor in money, but rich in the genius that goes so far to make the home beautiful, and proving that lavish expenditure of money is not a pre-requisite to decorative treatment. This little house has but seven rooms, including a tiny hall, and is so common as to render "singing up" a matter of difficulty. But its mistress was not dismayed, and worked with such results that at least one famous artist admired the harmony and repose of this little home. In the first place every inside door, except that leading into the kitchen, was taken from its hinges. The walls were covered with plain, coarse manilla paper, such as wholesale firms use for wrapping goods. A deep frieze was made of common wall paper cut through the centre, half its width serving for the depth of the frieze. Over the doors were poles cut from the woods with the bark remaining, which were put up with cornice hooks. Suspended from these were postices made from burlap, ornamented with bands of Canton flannel of blue, green, and maroon; the edges finished in leather stiches and long satin stich done with crewel. At the dining-room windows, were curtains of cretonne, lined with plain colour, and under each window a seat formed of a packing-box, upholstered to match the curtains. The lids, being attached with leather hinges, could be raised at pleasure, thus forming useful receptacles for housewifely belongings. The tiny parlour had window-seat curtains of cheese cloth, drawn back in the corners with bows of ribbon; over these were cretonne curtains falling to the floor. These were repeated in the hall to form a closet across one corner for coats and hats. The carpets were of the simplest description, and the picture frames and other wall decorations were mainly of home manufacture.

two cold hands in his, said, "Pansy! try to look happy for a short time; shake off this depression. In a few moments all our friends will be here. We must preside at the breakfast. Don't let them guess the truth, now in the first hours of our wedded life!"

"It is not a wedding, simply the carrying out of a bargain!" she returned, holding her head regally erect.

"Let there be peace between us. Wife, have pity on my great love for you!" he pleaded.

"Don't call me that!" she cried, wrenching her hands free.

"You are that to me now. Nothing can alter it. Mine against the whole world!"

"In name only. An empty mockery," she returned, bitterly.

"You mistake, he said, firmly. "You are legally mine. You owe me obedience. I can insist on your submission."

"Try to make me submit, and see what I will do," she exclaimed, passionately. "Obedient to you, indeed!"

"Yes, to me. Your first duty is to me."

"My first duty is to my father, and you have not given me those deeds and papers which it will be my joy to give him to free him from his troubles. Please give them to me now. I have sacrificed myself for them."

"Pansy!" he began, gravely, putting his hands on her shoulders and keeping them there, though he felt she shrank from the contact, "do you know that I need not give them to you?"

"Why not?" she demanded, imperiously. "Because the contract is not fulfilled. While you defy me you are not morally my wife."

"Do you refuse to give them to me?" she asked, turning so deathly white he thought she would faint.

"What if I do?" he queried, gazing steadily into the defiant purple eyes.

"If you do I will publish this miserable, scordid motive for our wretched marriage far and near. I will not appear at the breakfast. I will not go one step with you on this wedding journey which has been planned to throw dust in the eyes of the world. I will stay here, shut myself up in one room, if need be, never see you, never speak to you. Do you like the plan?"

"No, I do not," he returned, with a harsh laugh, dropping his hands from her shoulders. "And as the Squire's feelings must be studied, and you seem to have forgotten them, I yield. Here are the deeds," taking several papers from a cabinet, and handing them to her. "And now permit me to lead you to the breakfast," and arm-in-arm these twain, who had been made one, went into the gathering of friends and relatives with anger against each other in their hearts.

The breakfast was magnificent, the guests merry, the bridegroom feverishly gay. Only the bride was cold, and white and silent, and moved like one in a dream when Mrs. Saxby told her it was time to go and don the pretty heliotrope travelling costume.

She did not rally even under Topsy's gay badinage, and clung to her father convulsively at parting, twining her arms round him again and again, and at last only being induced to enter the carriage by a whispered word of warning from her aunt.

At last she was in, seated beside her groom. The door was slammed to, and away started the four greys as hard as they could to North-down station, followed by a volley of rice and satin slippers.

"She doesn't care for that fellow, I'll lay my bottom dollar," muttered Roger, following the carriage with his eyes. "I wonder whether she would have looked happier if I were at her side? But of course it wouldn't have done for me to go in there, as she wasn't an heiress. I must marry money. She is lovely, though. I shall never care for any other woman as I do for her," and heaving a sigh for the 'might-have-beens,' he went into the Court, and delighted Topsy by paying her the most devoted attentions for the rest of the day.

CHAPTER V.

"Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?
Or my cheeks make pale with care,
'Cause another's rosy are?
Be she fairer than the day,
Or the flowery meads in May—
If she be not so to me,
What care I how fair she be?"

HALF-AN-HOUR later Cherton and Pansy were in the train, speeding away towards London. She reclined in one corner of the carriage, he in the other.

Both displayed an immense amount of indifference. Perhaps hers was more real than his, though he seemed to be chiefly interested in the *Field*. However, he cast many furtive glances over the top of his paper at his silent companion, who looked distractingly pretty despite her pallor and the weary droop of her mouth.

He offered her the *Times*. She took it and threw it down; then he pretended to doze, apparently oblivious of her presence.

"Tired?" he asked, with a prodigious yawn, after a while.

"Horribly tired," she returned, in languid tone, with closed eyes.

"Slow this, isn't it?" he went on, with another yawn.

"Awfully," she agreed, coolly.

"Wish we could get something to eat to pass the time."

"You should have provided a hamper to satisfy your cravings," she said, sarcastically.

"Yes. Sorry I didn't think of it. However, we stop at Carne fifteen minutes. I shall be able to fortify the inner man there."

"Yes."

"Can I get you anything?" he asked, with elaborate carelessness when the train stopped.

"Nothing, thanks," she responded, coldly.

Nevertheless he appeared in two or three minutes with a cup of tea and some bread-and-butter, which he insisted on her taking, and which she was secretly only too glad to have, as she had not tasted a thing that day.

"Feel better now?" he queried, cavalierly, when they were once more flying on through the ripening cornfields.

"I have not felt ill," she said, haughtily.

"No, only you looked tired out, ready to faint."

"I should think you would find studying the landscape more interesting than studying me."

"Perhaps I might," he agreed, with aggravating nonchalance, turning his back on her; and then there was a silence, broken after a while by a sob.

"Pansy, you are crying," he exclaimed, and in a moment was at her side.

"You are mistaken," said the girl, coldly, turning her pale, lovely face, with its wistful eyes, to him.

"I don't think I was," he remarked, dubiously. "I wish you would let me comfort you," he went on, tenderly. "Can't we be friends—if nothing more?"

"There can be no friendship between you and me," was the haughty retort, and then she stared out at the country over which night was beginning to throw her pall; but he did not move, and presently he saw her lean back against the cushions with an air of fatigue, and then gradually her head drooped until it reclined on his shoulder.

He did not stir, remaining perfectly still. He had no wish to disturb her. It was charming to him to feel her there close to him, to have her leaning, as it were, on his strength. Only when an awkward lurch woke her, and she jerked her head away angrily, and sat very erect, he felt angry, and sore, and miserable; and felt that he was set upon, relapsing into a sullen silence, which lasted until they reached London. Then he helped her to alight with his usual courtesy, and, leaving his man to look after the luggage, called a

hansom, and drove off to the charming little house in Park-lane that Mrs. Saxby had secured for them for the rest of the season.

A late dinner was ready for them, prepared and appointed in such style that it ought to have gained words of approval from the most fastidious, but Cherton Saxby and his bride spoke never a syllable, and neither did justice to the many good things which loaded the table.

Afterwards he lit a cigar, and suggested that they should go into the pretty drawing-room, of which they had caught a glimpse as they passed through the hall, and have some music; but she declined, and soon left the room, going up to her own apartments.

He followed her while in sight with longing eyes, and then solaced himself as he best could with cigars and brandy-and-soda, and about midnight followed his bride's example, and went upstairs.

He sought Pansy's room, and felt an odd thrill of annoyance as he saw how she shrank back at the sight of him, trembling.

"I have come to my good-night!" he explained, holding out his hand.

"Have you?" she murmured, shrinking still further from him, for his face was flushed, and in his eyes was blazing a look of baffled passion.

"Won't you even shake hands?" he queried, after a pause, reproachfully.

"If you wish it," she said, reluctantly, and in an instant both her hands were clasped in his, and he was holding them clenched against his breast. "Let me go!" she cried, angrily, striving to free herself.

"Pansy, have you no pity?" he pleaded.

"None for you!"

"How can you be so hard? Think of my love for you!"

"It never existed! Why do you harp on that string? Our marriage was a bargain, nothing more! Keep your part of the contract, I will keep mine."

"I cannot! It is too hard; for I do love you with all my soul!" and then he drew her swiftly to him, and rained down passionate kisses on lip, and cheek, and brow.

"Coward!" she panted, wrenching herself out of his arms, and standing before him with glittering eyes and ashen cheeks. "Coward, to take a mean advantage of me! How dare you? How dare you insult me?"

"Pansy!" he exclaimed, amazed at the fury that possessed her, trying to take her hands to soothe her.

"Don't touch me! Stand aside! You have no right here! These rooms, at least, are mine, and should be sacred from your intrusion!" and, eluding him by a quick movement, she gained the dressing-room, and shut the door in his face, locking it as she did so.

"Very well; so be it," he muttered, his face growing as white as hers. "Since you are obdurate and merciless, I will meet you with your own weapons!" and turning, he left the room, with a miserable sense of defeat on him, despite that he held the whip-hand, and had the power, to a certain extent, to control her actions.

Husband and wife did not meet after that stormy scene for some days. She pleaded indisposition, and kept her room; and he did not again intrude his presence on her, only sent a polite message of inquiry as to her health every morning by the French maid; and went out amongst his friends and acquaintances, and concocted a pretty little fiction as to his wife's illness, wherewith to stop their wagging tongues and curious glances, under which he writhed and smarted, though he gave no sign of it.

Towards the end of the week she grew tired of this self-imposed imprisonment, and telling Toinette to get out a pretty dress, declared herself well enough to go down to dinner, and submitted herself to the skilful foreigner's hand to have her hair dressed and her form robed.

While this was going on the astute Gaul kept up a running commentary of praises

about her master's personal appearance. He was "*tres belle*," "*magnifique*," "*de jolie taille*," &c., &c., indulging in remarks with a freedom an English servant would not have ventured on.

Pansy listened in silence, and after her toilette was completed, went slowly down the staircase to the pretty room she had not yet put foot in. She paused an instant outside the door, and then, summoning all her courage, turned the handle swiftly, and entered. She need not have hesitated, however, for her husband was not there, and she felt half relieved at his not being present, and yet unconsciously angry—why, she knew not. A quarter of an hour went by, which she spent looking at all the dainty trifles strewn about, and furtively watching the door, which was at last thrown open by the butler, a stately individual with white hair, and a vinous complexion, who announced that dinner was on the table.

"But Captain Saxby has not returned!" said Pansy.

"The Captain dines at Sir Clifford Hunter's to-night, madam," returned the white-headed manial, in a dignified manner.

"Oh, yes, of course! I had forgotten," she muttered, an angry flush suffusing her cheek at this *exposé* of her ignorance of her bridegroom's movements; and she went in, dined alone in solitary state, and went to bed and wept. Such is the nature of woman!

The next morning she enjoyed, or rather did not enjoy, a solitary breakfast, and was preparing to take luncheon alone, when the door opened, and Cherton came in.

She flushed at the sight of him, and instinctively drew up her slender throat, but he bowed courteously, and asked if she felt better?

"Yes, thanks!" she replied, trying to emulate his coolness.

"I daresay the heat upset you!" he went on, scanning the newspaper.

"Very likely!"

"Will you take anything now?" she ventured, after a pause, that was awkward to her at any rate.

"Thanks! A little chicken. Oh! don't trouble, pray!" as she made a movement towards the bell, "I will ring it," and he did, and gave the order to Carter to bring another plate, &c.

She was just a trifle annoyed to think that everything should be so well appointed in the house, and no thanks to her—the meals well-cooked, well-served, and with strict punctuality, whether there was anyone to enjoy them or no. The servants were certainly well-trained, and knew their business.

"Carter, give Mrs. Saxby a glass of that Madeira. It will do you good," he said authoritatively, as she made a movement of refusal, and when it was poured out she drank it meekly.

"There are a whole sheaf of invitations up there," he remarked coolly, pointing at the mantel shelf when luncheon was finished, as he lit a cigar, and commenced to peruse a sporting paper. "You had better look over them, and see if there are any you care to accept, unless you mean to live a life of seclusion like a nun, and renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world!"

"I don't mean to do anything of the sort," she retorted, a trifle sharply. "Why should I?"

"I know of no reason," he said, nonchalantly, without looking up, "I thought you might imagine one!"

"I don't exercise my imagination in that way!" she answered, coldly.

"Glad to hear it. You may be that *rara avis* a sensible woman, without fads or nonsense!"

"I hope I am."

"So do I, cordially!"

"Are there any of these you wish me to refuse?" she asked diplomatically, feeling they were getting on dangerous ground.

"None!" he answered with the utmost

indifference. "You can accept anything you like, and refuse anything you don't like without reference to me!"

"Am I to understand from that speech?" she asked with a haughtiness which she assumed to hide her chagrin, "that you do not mean to appear with me in society, or accompany me anywhere?"

"By no means. You bear my name. I should wish to shield that from scandal. We must appear together *sometimes* for the sake of the *convenances*, but of course, there are many entertainments and places you can go to alone, without being bored by my obnoxious presence, and as you said, we can be a husband and wife *à la mode*."

"I see," she said, slowly, hardly liking this Roland for her Oliver, and gathering up the invitations she prepared to depart to her own rooms.

"There is a victoria at your disposal if you feel inclined to drive to-day, or at any time. If you give Carter the order it will come round for you."

"Thanks. I should like to this afternoon."

"Very well; drive in the park, and at half-past six I will be at Albert gate. If you will pick me up there we can take a turn or two for the edification and benefit of our friends—or rather, our enemies, unless it will be too much for you."

"Not at all. I will be at the Albert gate at the time you name."

And she was; and angry against her though he was, he could not but notice how many admiring glances followed her, and what a sensation she created. She was all in white, with a great broad-brimmed hat loaded with snowy plumes; and her beautiful face, without a vestige of colour, and the great purple eyes were shown off by this setting.

When the carriage drew up by the railings a perfect crowd of men came up and begged to be introduced to his wife.

He performed the introductions with very good grace, and played the part of a newly-married man admirably.

Once launched on the waves of the world of fashion, Pansy entered with feverish gaiety into every detail of the giddy, endless round of society. There was no limit to her caprices, nor to her extravagances, and Cherton bit his lips in silence over the heavy bills that came in. Her costly and *recherché* dresses were the talk of the town; the beauty of her thoroughbred Arab and the pair of greys that drew her victoria in place of the sober bay mare with which she had started. Then her entertainments were perfect; small, of course, because the band-box house in Park-lane would not hold many, but nothing was lacking to make the dinners and at homes successful. A French cook, good wines, splendid fruit, first-rate music, pretty women, handsome men, all were to be found at lovely Mrs. Saxby's.

She was acknowledged to be the beauty of the year; the rage poets raved about; painters limned her; statesmen courted her; even nobility sought her out and favoured her with attentions.

Wildly she plunged into every distraction, theatres, operas, fancy-balls, dinners, luncheons, pic-nics, boating excursions, races, Harlingham, Skindles; everywhere she appeared, sometimes with her husband, more often without. Still, she never lacked an escort or a chaperon.

Men were always ready to pay her attention, and women, even the most exclusive, to accompany her if she wished it.

Cherton looked on outwardly unmoved, while his young wife was *fêted*, and caressed, and flattered to the top of her bent; only in his secret soul he did not like it, and was casting about for an excuse to suggest a departure from town. He was urged on into doing this by something he heard one night at a ball at Lady Digby's.

As usual, he was late; as usual, Pansy had arrived with a frisky chaperon only a few years older than herself; as usual, her programme was more than full, and she was

whirling round the room in Roger Cleveland's arms, who had found his way to town, and, by virtue of his handsome face, was warmly welcomed by society, and followed her like a shadow.

"Who is that the beauty is dancing with?" asked one guardsman of another.

"I believe his name is Cleveland!" returned the second. "Report says he was sweet upon her once."

"At any rate, if he wasn't, he is" laughed the first.

"Undoubtedly! He haunts her like a shadow. Does not give another fellow a chance."

"Perhaps she wouldn't, either!"

"Possibly not. She seems to like him!"

"And where is her husband?"

"Oh, knocking about at the clubs and places!"

"Doesn't he care for her?"

"It doesn't look like it. He leaves her to the spoiling of the world, and the tender attentions of Mr. Cleveland, in a very nonchalant fashion."

"Is he mad, or a brute?"

"Neither, my dear fellow! Remember what the *savants* says, 'When women become ours we cease to be theirs.' She is his wife, that is enough."

"I shouldn't think it enough," with a long look at Pansy. "Why, she's lovely—simply lovely!"

"Yes, I pity her with such a face to be neglected by her husband. He must be a fool. There will be dozens of other fellows ready to console her."

"Of course! I'd swell the list gladly," with a half laugh. And then they passed on. But Cherton remained deep in thought, pondering over what he had heard; and the result was that he took her home early, and the next morning commenced to sound her as to leaving town.

"It is very hot!" he remarked, by way of an opening, as he toyed with his coffee-cup, "isn't it?"

"Very," she agreed, laconically.

"Town is beginning to empty!"

"Only just beginning. It still seems full to me!"

"Full of dust and heat," he said, irritably, pushing his chair back, and rising from the table. "The country, I have no doubt, is lovely now."

"I daresay it is," with a little unconscious sigh.

"Would you like to go there, Pansy?"

"I don't mind; just as you like," she replied, with exasperating indifference.

"Don't you care to see the Court and dad again?"

"I should like to see dad again!"

"You don't care about the Court, your home?"

"I could hardly look upon it as my home now. The one I love is not there!"

"True," returned her husband, controlling his annoyance at her insinuation of dislike of him. "Still he is not far from it. The Dower House is only fifteen minutes' walk from the Court. You could see him every day."

"Could I?"

"Of course! The housekeeper from here can go with us. You need have no household cares to tie you. You will have perfect freedom and liberty!"

"Your mother may want his society!"

"Oh! mother is accustomed to being by herself. What shall we do? Shall we arrange to start for Northdown early next week?"

"Yes," she assented, listlessly.

"Would you rather remain in town?"

"No, I have no choice." And then to close the discussion she went out of the room, and getting her maid to attire her in a dream of a dress, all lace and mauve ribbons, went to a garden party at Mrs. Leyton's, and was quickly surrounded by a crowd of admirers, while her husband lounged off to one of his numerous clubs, and tried to solace himself with masculine society, to banish the blues, that had such

a grip of him, by smoking and billiard-playing, and drinking iced soda-and-brandy in an unlimited kind of fashion that made his friends stare.

CHAPTER VI.

THE days passed heavily and wearily to Pansy after her return to North Court. She was well provided for; had every luxury and comfort woman could wish, and yet she often thought how much rather she would have had the dinner of herbs, and a little love to season it, than all these dainties and the wretched indifference that reigned at her sumptuously-appointed table.

One bright day, towards the close of October, she set out for her usual walk, accompanied by Fidget, and, after chaffing to, and consoling with, one or two old rheumatic women in the village, passed on towards the shore.

"Be ye goin' roun' the bluff to-day?" called out one of the crones.

"Yes," she nodded.

"Then be careful an' dinna linger so long. It's a spring tide to-day, and there will be na ganging back after four, and to wind's arising."

"I will be careful," she answered, and then went on over the smooth yellow sand, walking as close to the sea as she could, watching the waves rush in, and then recede, leaving a foamy mark behind.

It was a splendid day, sunshiny and clear, with a wind that seemed to threaten freshening. Sand-pipers and gulls were flying by, diving and twirling as they waited for the wary fish. Shore larks were twittering, crows sailing up high in the heavens; the sea was deep-blue, each wave with crests of snow, that told of coming turbulence in the ocean.

The sunrays fell on it in a trail of phosphorescent light, that glittered like jewels on the dancing waters. A few cobbles were sailing homeward, otherwise there was not a vessel to be seen.

On she went, on—on, forgetful of the old crone's warning; and when at last a cloud obscuring the sun made a sudden darkness fall around, she turned with a start, and saw the bluff, that stood out over a quarter of a mile, and which she must round to get back to the village, was a long, long way off, and that the sea was looking angry, and the wind getting boisterous.

She at once began to walk back at a smart pace, the dog, giving short, sharp barks, running on before. She kept an anxious eye on the water, and noted that each wave crept further in. She hurried on as fast as she could, but the waters crept in faster, and when she neared the promontory she saw with a sinking heart, a sickening feeling of horror, that the waves were beating with angry violence against its base—that her retreat was cut off!

Wildly she looked about, but there was no escape. The cliffs were over a hundred feet high, and sheer. There was no opening down to the shore for miles; she must try and wade. She advanced, getting her feet wet, and Fidget plunged boldly in, and commenced swimming at once. She saw it was too deep for her to attempt that; she would be at once swept off her feet. The dog stopped, and looked round when he found she did not follow, but with a cry and a gesture she urged him to go on, knowing it was her only chance. If they saw him return alone and met him, they would know what it meant, and send a boat for her. Then she sat down on a rock to wait. For what? Either life or death—a horrible death!

Motionless she remained, staring straight out, straining her eyes to see if the welcome help were coming. The gloom of the early autumn night was beginning to steal over the sea. No help came; she gave herself up for lost, and sat listlessly with head bowed on her breast, wondering if Cherton would care when

he saw her dead body washed ashore, seaweed tangled amid her dusky tresses, her eyes closed, her lips sealed in death!

She felt drowsy and cold, and was giving way to the desire to sleep when the bark of a dog fell on her ear, and the next moment a boat shot round the bluff, and came rapidly towards her. A few moments more it grated on the shore, her husband threw an anchor over, and leapt out, followed by the dripping Fidget.

"Pansy!" he cried, "come quickly; there is not a moment to lose!"

"Have you come alone?" she asked, slowly, not rising.

"Yes. I was on the shore when the dog came round, and the women told me you had come here; the boat was ready, so I jumped in and pulled as hard as I could."

"Why did you trouble?" she asked, dreamily.

"Trouble!" he echoed, in intense surprise. "Child, what are you thinking of? Do you imagine I should leave you to die a horrible death?"

"Would you have cared?" she asked, wistfully.

"Cared!" he cried, passionately, looking at the lovely pale face, "I could not live without you!"

"Cherton! Husband!" she murmured, holding out her arms, and in a moment she leapt in his; and as they gazed into each other's eyes they knew the barrier between them had broken down, that they loved as man and wife should.

"Hurry, dearest!" he urged, after that swift, sweet embrace, helping her into the boat, and drawing up the anchor, he seized the oars, and commenced pulling vigorously.

He had a terrible battle before him, he knew. The current was running strongly from the village, the wind was high, and the waves boisterous; but he had something now to nerve his arm, to stimulate him to heroic effort, and he fought his way slowly round the bluff, and struggled on. Just as he thought he was safe, getting into smoother water, one of his oars snapped, and he was nearly powerless.

"I can't get on now!" he said, with a groan, looking at Pansy's white face, "I shall pull her right round!" However, he went on, trying to keep her straight. "Help is coming!" he cried, after a few awful minutes. "They have launched the lifeboat; she is coming now!" and so she was.

In a short time Pansy, and Cherton, and the spaniel were safely aboard the lifeboat, and the frail skiff was lashed to her stern, and the hardy fishermen were pulling with might and main towards Northdown.

Roger Cleveland was steering, and had routed the men out, and got the boat launched when he heard of Mrs. Saxby's danger.

Cherton would rather have owed his and his wife's safety to any other; man only he didn't mind it so much when, later on, he learnt Roger meant to make Topsy Weldon Mrs. Cleveland.

"This is our real homecoming, my dearest! my own!" Cherton whispered passionately in Pansy's ear, as he lifted her from the carriage in which they had driven up from the village.

"Yes, Cherton! There is no shadow between us now to darken our love. I was wrong. I mistook my feelings. I loved you all along, only my pride blinded me. Can you forgive me?"

"Darling, need you ask?"

And this answer satisfied her.

[THE END.]

COURTESY.—A man, to be successful in love, should think only of his sweetheart and himself. An old author observes that lovers are never tired of each other's company, because they are always talking of themselves.

FACETIÆ.

THE blindest man sometimes makes the most cutting remarks.

WHEE is a lamp in a window like a tomb-stone? When it is set up for a late husband.

A CONUNDRUM for botanists and theologians: If trees had any religion, what would it naturally be? Buddhism.

A BOY who was told to confine himself to strong physical diet, took to soda water, as he thought that was the most *fiscial* thing he knew of.

"What is the interior of Africa principally used for?" asked a teacher of the class in geography. "For purposes of exploration," answered the head boy.

"THE prisoner at the bar seems to be a very smooth-looking fellow," said a spectator to the sheriff. "Yes; he was *frowned* just before he was brought in," responded the officer.

WIFE: "I was reading in a medical journal to-day that neuralgia had greatly increased since people discontinued the use of the night-cap." Husband: "If that is so I must order two or three gallons of whiskey at once."

A PEDLER being arrested for selling goods without a license, indignantly demanded why a license is necessary for a man to sell merchandise in this land of liberty, whereupon the magistrate informed him that liberty is not license.

A PRETENTIOUS person was praising a small bottle of wine to Daniel Webster (who was luncheon with him), and despatched at length on the fact that it was over a hundred years old. "It is very little for its age," quietly remarked Webster.

BOSTON LANDLORD (to coloured porter): "See if the gentleman in parlour H have finished discussing their dinner." Porter (having returned from parlour H): "Day am fra eatin' de dinner, boss, but dey atat done 'cousin' it yet."—*American Paper*.

POMPOUS and irritated traveller to landlord: "Didn't you ever have a gentleman stop with you before?" Landlord (surveying him critically): "Be you a gentleman?" Traveller: "Yes, sir, I am." Landlord: "Then I never had one stop with me before."

A WOMAN hastily stepped up to the driver of a train at Stamford, and screamed out: "Is this the right train?" "Where to?" politely asked the man. "Oh, you fool! Don't you know where you're going?" cried the woman, as the train started, and left her standing on the platform.

I SUPPOSE it is impossible to get anything like a just notion of a toboggan slide except at the Exhibition," said a young girl to a friend. "Oh, yes; if you'll drop some orange peel at the head of the stairs and then step on it, you may get a very good idea of a toboggan slide," was the reply.

A GLEBOYMAN, in winding up a touching funeral discourse, said to the mourning friends: "Be comforted, ye sorrowing ones, there is still a balm in Gilead." The reporter took it down correctly, but when it came out in the newspaper, it read: "Be comforted, ye snoring ones, there is still a barn in Guilford."

A GENTLEMAN travelling in Ireland was driven a long way by a post-boy during a pouring rain. On alighting at a tavern he said to the driver: "Well, my boy, you are pretty wet, are you not?" to which the post-boy responded: "It's not the wet I care for, your honour; but, faith, I'm very dry, an' that's disagreeable."

OLD GENTLEMAN (to his nephew): "I wonder what makes young Dobson so awfully unpopular? He's always seemed a very nice fellow." Nephew: "Yes; but, you see, he writes poetry." Old Gentleman: "Well, that isn't a crime, is it?" Nephew: "But, you see, he insists on reading his poetry to people." Old Gentleman: "He does? That settles it."

SOCIETY.

A COSTLY widow's cap is to be sent to the Queen as a Jubilee gift from the Queen-Regent of Spain. It is made of priceless old Spanish lace, with an embroidered veil at the back hanging almost to the ground, and a pearl diadem in front, the jewels being embroidered on the lace by Queen Christina herself, who is an accomplished needlewoman. The cap is copied from an old portrait which Queen Christina found in the Palace at Madrid, representing a widow of the Spanish Royal House in the gala costume of three centuries ago.

HER MAJESTY has accepted a beautifully embroidered screen from Miss Scott, eldest daughter of Lena Lady Scott; it has four folds embroidered with sprays of the iris, lily, rose and geranium, on pale blue satin, the arrangement and embroidery being the work of Miss Scott. The frame is in the Adams style, painted and enamelled in white and gold, and enriched with carved trellis panels, each fold being surmounted by the crown of England.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES has accepted a fancy table made by the boys in the joinery department of the Boys' Refuge, Strangeways. The table has been made at the stand which the institution has at the Manchester Royal Exhibition, where the boys in all the industrial departments are to be seen at work.

HER MAJESTY's second State ball will take place at Buckingham Palace on Wednesday, July 6, and the second State concert on Friday, July 15.

LADY WILLIS held a large reception at Government House, Portsmouth, in honour of the Queen's birthday. Amongst those present were the Mayor and Mayoress of Portsmouth, Colonel Stirling, C.B., and Mrs. Stirling, Admiral and Mrs. Lethbridge, General and the Misses Armstrong, Major and Mrs. Auld, Major-General and Mrs. Bambridge, Admiral and the Misses Chads, Admiral and Mrs. Grieve, the Rev. Canon Jacob, the Rev. E. F. Grant, Sir W. Cunack Smith, Colonel and Mrs. Stavelly Murray, Colonel and Mrs. Newbolt, and Countess Metaxa. All the officers present wore full uniform.

Amongst many effective dresses the following may be mentioned: Lady Willis, dress of electric-blue satin, draped with white lace, diamond stars in hair; Mrs. Playfair, bodice and train of rich crimson brocade, petticoat of crimson-satin and black lace; Mrs. Tison, dress of pale electric grey, ornamented with pink aigrettes and small pink roses; Miss Tison, black satin and tulle, with crimson flowers; Miss Brown-Grieve and Miss O'Malley, dresses of rich white silk, with white aigrettes and ribbons; Mrs. Madden, bodice and train of striped black and white velvet, petticoat of white silk, with rows of black lace, diamond ornaments; Mrs. Maitland, dress of cream lace and satin, with knots of pale heliotrope ribbon; Miss G. Langley, dress of rich crimson velvet and écarl lace. The table decorations in the refreshment-room were of dark blue clematis and scarlet geraniums.

The Annual Tennis Tournament for the championship of Ireland was held in Fitzwilliam-square, Dublin, and was a highly successful one, both for the players and the lookers-on; bright sunshine prevailed during the week, and added much to the gaiety of the scene. The prizes were distributed by H.B.H. Princess Edward of Saxe-Weimar, who, together with the Prince, visited the tournament several afternoons. The Princess was presented with a handsome bouquet upon her arrival, the prevailing colours of which were brown and gold, the colours of the Fitzwilliam Club. Princess Edward was attired in a handsome costume of black faille, and wore a black bonnet, ornamented with jet.

STATISTICS.

AMERICAN POLICE.—The police department of Philadelphia is composed of 1,456 officers and men; that of New York city, 3,101. The former city has 469 in its fire department; the latter, 1,139.

THE CZAR OF RUSSIA, at his Winter Palace on the banks of the Neva, St. Petersburg, possesses what is probably the largest permanent installation of electric light ever placed in a single building. The palace itself is illuminated by 12,000 incandescent lamps, while fifty-six powerful arcs light up the front and the various courtyards. The machine-room contains eight engines, capable of developing 2,500 horse power; the dynamos, including reserve machines, are twenty-six in number.

THE report of the Deputy Master of the Mint for 1886, which is now issued, states that during the year no gold had been coined, the Mint having been exclusively engaged on silver and bronze coinage, the value of the former being £417,384, and of the bronze coins £51,669. The number of half-crowns coined was 994,752, and of florins 592,020; while the shillings struck amounted to 1,774,080; and the sixpences to 2,724,480 in number. The number of threepenny-pieces coined was 6,150,408.

GEMS.

It is impossible to make people understand their ignorance; for it requires knowledge to perceive it; and therefore he that can perceive it, hath it not.

Of all the vanities, the vanity of high birth is the greatest. True nobility is derived from virtue, not from birth. Titles, indeed, may be purchased; but virtue is the only coin that makes the bargain valid.

The disesteem and contempt of others is inseparable from pride. It is hardly possible to overvalue ourselves but by undervaluing our neighbours.

Let every man take care how he speaks and writes of honest people, and not set down at a venture the first thing that comes uppermost.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SPONGE CAKE.—Take twelve eggs, the weight of the eggs in sugar, half their weight in flour, and the juice and rind (grated) of one lemon. Sponge cake made in this way should be baked in time the size and shape of a brick.

ORANGE LAYER CAKE.—One cup sugar, one-half cup butter, one-half cup sweet milk, one and a half teaspoonfuls of baking-powder, whites of three eggs; flavour to taste; cream butter and sugar; add milk and flour, with baking-powder well sifted with flour, and lastly add whites of eggs well beaten. This will make three good layers. Materials for jelly: Juice of two and rind of one orange, one cup of sugar, one-half cup of water, a pinch of salt, yolks of three eggs, one heaping teaspoonful of corn-flour; boil all together.

CORRIED VEAL.—Take two pounds of lean veal and cut it into small pieces half-an-inch or more square. Now cut an onion into slices, and a tart apple into slices; put the apple and onion into a stewpan with an ounce of butter and a clove of garlic. Then, over a moderate fire, stir them until they become nicely browned; then stir in a tablespoonful of curry powder and half a tablespoonful of flour. Mix all the ingredients well together, and then pour in a pint of water. Allow the contents to boil up, and then add the pieces of veal, and set the stewpan where they may simmer until they become tender. Then add a little lemon juice and salt, mix all gently together, turn out on a dish, and serve with boiled rice separate.

MISCELLANEOUS.

AN EEL INDUSTRY.—One of the industries along the Shannon River in Ireland is the capture and cultivation of eels. The taking of forty thousand in a single night sometimes occurred years ago; but the present product is much less, owing to the drainage of the country and other influences. At Castle Connell are five immense tanks, in which the eels are kept alive and allowed to grow, the dead and the weak ones being dipped out every morning by means of large landing nets, and sold cheaply to poor people. It is during this fishing process that the inmates of the tanks are seen to the best advantage, for every fin and tail are in motion, swimming upward and downward in one vast living mass. Eels of all ages, sizes, are there. Thousands are there also in the tank, varying in weight from two ounces to twelve pounds. These latter are the well-flavoured, juicy fellows that are converted into the delicious "collared eel," for which Killarney is so justly famous.

There is no tree that is so sure to grow without any care as the willow. A twig from a branch of the tree stuck into the moist earth, and the labour is completed. An article in a German contemporary, which is a great authority, recommends the cultivation of willow trees, not only from an economical and industrial point of view, but also for hygienic purposes. They are especially useful where the drinking water is taken from fountains or natural wells, and still more where there are morasses and meadows; for in the vicinity of willow trees water is always clear and pure. Let those who doubt this fact place a piece of willow which has not yet begun to strike, into a bottle of water, and place this with another bottle containing water only in a warm room for eight days; in the first bottle will be found shoots and rootlets in clear water, while the other bottle will contain putrefying water. Holland is covered with willows, and their dam works are made stronger by the net-work formed by the roots.

DAINTY ECONOMY.—An art magazine recently described a house of the humblest sort, poor in money, but rich in the genius that goes so far to make the home beautiful, and proving that lavish expenditure of money is not a pre-requisite to decorative treatment. This little house has but seven rooms, including a tiny hall, and is so common as to render "fixing up" a matter of difficulty. But its mistress was not dismayed, and worked with such results that at least one famous artist admired the harmony and repose of this little home. In the first place every inside door, except that leading into the kitchen, was taken from its hinges. The walls were covered with plain, coarse manilla paper, such as wholesale firms use for wrapping goods. A deep frieze was made of common wall paper cut through the centre, half its width serving for the depth of the frieze. Over the doors were poles cut from the woods with the bark remaining, which were put up with cornice hooks. Suspended from these were pantières made from burlap, ornamented with bands of Canton flannel of blue, green, and maroon, the edges finished in feather stitches and long satin stitch done with crewel. At the dining-room windows, were curtains of cretonne, lined with plain colour, and under each window a seat formed of a packing box, upholstered to match the curtains. The lids, being attached with leather hinges, could be raised at pleasure, thus forming useful receptacles for housewifely belongings. The tiny parlour had window-sash curtains of cheese cloth, drawn back in the centre with bows of ribbon; over these were cretonne curtains falling to the floor. These were repeated in the hall to form a closet across one corner for coats and hats. The carpets were of the simplest description, and the picture frames and other wall decorations were mainly of home manufacture.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. B. A.—August, 13, 1887, came on Thursday.

I. A. B.—Your writing shows great need of practice and study.

NETTA.—You are a blonde. The hair enclosed is reddish-yellow.

E. G.—Your writing is very suitable for business purposes. Strive to write plainly.

A. C. C.—The pads you name can be had from any theatrical costumier. The price varies.

H. S. O.—The value of a ton of pure gold is nearly £120,551; of a ton of silver nearly £7,541.

E. N. O.—Washington's birthday was made a national holiday throughout the United States in deserved honour to him.

T. M. A.—Your writing is fairly plain, your grammar medium. The writing indicates self-esteem and ambition.

E. N. C.—All proposals to go out together should emanate from the gentleman, no matter how devoted he may be.

JOSE.—We cannot undertake to prescribe for so serious a complaint. Consult a physician. Your writing indicates generosity.

R. W. S.—The business hours of the Bank of England are from 10 to 4 every day except Saturday, when the bank closes at 2.

LITTLE WONDER.—"Sapristi" is a French oath. The "Park aux Cerfs" was the scene of Louis XV.'s most infamous pleasures.

D. H.—Practice is the best thing to help the voice, but no amount of it will make a singer if nature has not given the beginning.

"Sic Vos"—You have blue eyes and bronze hair; a summer suit of very small checks in dark-blue and brown would be becoming.

F. W.—Try bay rum and quinine rubbed in every night before going to bed, as well as clipping the hairs as soon as they begin to split.

S. C.—Your writing indicates good-humour and open-heartedness. The other specimen a cautious, almost suspicious and sensitive nature.

R. R.—The hair is a pretty shade of brown. As to going on the stage, apply to the managers of some of our theatres, or to a dramatic agency.

E. L. J.—The sentence you refer to—"Heaven is always on the side of the strongest battalions" was uttered by the first Napoleon—Napoleon the Great.

BENNY.—We see nothing wrong in going occasionally with another than your betrothed lover, unless the latter objects. Your writing is fair, and denotes affection.

T. H.—Better let the moles alone, as anything that will remove them will hurt the skin. Yes, if the institute is reliable. Your writing is fair, but signifies a tendency to excess.

H. H. R.—Your writing is good, and indicates a preponderance of the affections. It is always best for the husband to be the older, though the reverse sometimes turns out very well.

T. H. S.—A "living room" is, properly speaking, a sitting-room; and is also sometimes used as a dining-room. Where there is no drawing-room it may, of course, as you suggest, be used as a reception-room, &c.

L. H. V.—Bohemia, a political and administrative province and nominal kingdom of Austro-Hungary, derives its name from the Boli, a Celtic people. The Emperor of Austria bears the title of King of Bohemia. The religion of the state is Roman Catholic.

L. B. D.—1. The President of Mexico is elected for four years. The national language is Spanish, and the Catholic religion predominates, though all other sects are protected by virtue of a law promulgated in 1873. 2. Since the establishment of Mexican independence the city of Mexico has been the scene of a number of revolutions and insurrections.

E. A. D.—The first steamer which crossed the Atlantic was the *Savannah*, which was launched at New York on August 22, 1818. She was intended to ply between New York and Liverpool. She made a preliminary voyage to the city whose name she bore, in April, 1819, where she arrived in seven days, after a very boisterous voyage. She left Savannah for Liverpool soon after, where she arrived in twenty-five days.

F. F. S.—Moneta was a surname of Juno among the Romans. She was so named from her assuring them that as long as they prosecuted the war against Pyrrhus with justice, the means for carrying it on would be supplied to them. After their arms were crowned with success they rendered divine honours to Juno, and resolved to coin money in her temple. Many etymologists derive the English word, money, from the Latin "moneta."

E. G. C.—The falls of Tequendama, near Bogota, the capital of the United States of Colombia, South America, are regarded as very remarkable because the waters descend in an unbroken mass 650 feet. The Rio Francisco, which traverses Bogota, joins the Rio Bogota in the centre of the plain, and the conjoint waters descend in a south-west direction through a ravine nearly twenty miles long. At the falls the cleft between the rocks is only thirty-six feet wide.

P. A.—Your writing is good.

W. H. B. D.—We do not give addresses such as you request.

G. T. S.—No statistics that we could vouch for in regard to them.

T. T.—Valentine's Day is a relic of the old pagan feast of purification.

B. S.—The only way to send those boards is in boxes packed so as to go without damage.

R. E. N.—The word quoted means invitation. In Latin it is *invitatio*; in Spanish, *invitación*. 2. Unknown to us.

M. S.—The hair is flax-gold, and very pretty. Why should you wish it lighter? You can have it bleached, but we do not advise it.

N. T.—The hair is dark-brown. Clipping the tips is said to thicken the lobes. Your writing is good, and indicates thoughtfulness.

T. N.—Put by your doubts and marry the man you love, if marry you must. A year's waiting would do no harm. You write fairly well.

CARRY ONE.—Use your own judgment in dealing with the person who seems so anxious to possess a goodly portion of your savings. It does not seem possible that any sensible business man would be willing to sell an article at one-third its actual value.

W. L.—Taking your letter as a standard, we are inclined to think that a small portion of the time occupied in courting the muses and lingering in the courts of love might be devoted to a persistent practice of penmanship and the study of grammatical construction.

THE GARDENER'S ADIEU.

ADIEU, my roses, red and bright,
My stately lily, tall and white,
I've tended these in storm and sun,
But now my labour all is done.

Henceforth, for others thy perfume
Thou'lt breathe, for others thou wilt bloom;
And eyes of others will behold
The sunshine in thy hearts of gold.

And some, perchance, may come and call
Thy buds, and call them beautiful;
And some may trample under foot
The fairest bloom and branch and root.

But oh! if any in these bowers
Years hence should say, "How fair these flowers!"
Upon the gardener's grave, a spray
Of these, my roses, let them lay.

Gay honeysuckle, reach not out
Thy sprays to clasp my form about;
And violet, look not at me,
With thy blue eyes, so pleadingly.

Oh, heart's-ease, thou from all the rest,
For thy sweet omen on my breast
I'll lay, then leave, in passing through
The garden gate unclosed, adieu.

E. H.—The hanging of May baskets goes back to the Saxon era. Eighty-nine pounds is rather a light weight for one of your age and height. Eat plenty of sugar and fat, and drink milk. Your writing indicates a quick, impetuous disposition. The hair is dark-brown.

R. E. L.—Speaking candidly, as you desire us to do, it is simply impossible to say one word in praise of penmanship, spelling or general make-up of your letter, as they all evidence a lamentable lack of practice and study. Eschew acting, and devote your spare time to more fitting subjects.

E. A. N.—There is nothing decidedly improper in the fact that a youth of fifteen tender years should desire to act as the escort of a young lady on an excursion or other pleasure trip, but when he expresses a wish to indulge in the expensive luxury of grand opera in her company, his parents should constitute themselves into an investigating committee, and ascertain in what manner the boy finds the means to warrant the expenditures which are usually necessary under such circumstances.

ELLIE.—The pearl oyster grows in beds. Pearls are found fastened to the shells and also loose in the flesh of the oyster. Ten or twelve of different sizes are often found in one shell, and not unfrequently as many as twenty. How the pearls are formed is not positively known, but it is supposed that some substance like a grain of sand gets into the membrane of the oyster, and that some of the mother-of-pearl gathers on it and thus makes the pearl. It is said that the Chinese force oysters to make pearls by putting small beads made out of mother-of-pearl into the shells of live oysters and then getting the oysters back again into the sea, when they soon cover the beads and form them into large pearls. It is also stated also that they put in little images of their gods, and they are thus changed into pearl ones. Artificial pearls are made of hollow glass beads, covered on the inside with what is called essence of pearl. This, we are told, is made from the scales of small fishes, which when soaked in water give off a kind of pearly film. The pearl essence is mixed with a little linseed oil and blown while hot into each bead by means of a little glass tube. When dry the beads are filled with white wax, which gives them weight and makes them less easy to break.

L. L. R.—Rather too young to accept such attentions. Wait a year.

LETA.—The picture gives promise of beauty, as indicated by the features, which are decidedly attractive. The hair enclosed is a pretty chestnut.

W. G. M.—Your handwriting is quite fair, and indicates character. Considering the little schooling you have had you are to be congratulated upon the progress so far made.

D. P.—An excellent remedy for tetter, ringworm and scald-head is made by taking one pound of simple cerate and a quarter of a pound of sulphuric acid and mixing them, when they will be ready for immediate use.

JOE.—The acrostic mill is somewhat out of order, but grinds you the following for your young lady:

Love, lone and lingering space
In your sweet eyes has found a place,
Long let him stay, and to his sighs
You heaven shall open to our eyes.

ORIANA.—A girl may play the harp, organ, violin, guitar, or the pretty zither; in fact, any instrument for which she has a fancy quite as well as the piano. As to learning a trade in six months, so much depends on native ability we can not say much about it. Your friend should send her story to a magazine publication for which it seems suited. Your writing is too slanting.

E. R. R.—The city of St. John's, Newfoundland, consists chiefly of one street, about a mile and a half in length. Though the harbour is one of the very best, in "The Narrows" only one vessel can pass at a time. There are no perceptible tides. St. John's, New Brunswick, is situated at the mouth of a river of its own name. The entrance of the river into the harbour, about a mile and a half above the city, is through a rocky gorge, which is spanned about 100 feet above low water by a suspension bridge 640 feet long.

E. G. A.—The Doctrinaires were a French constitutional party, which originated after the restoration of the Bourbons. They were so called because they contended that the State should be administered in accordance with rational doctrines and demonstrable political utility rather than with party formulas on the passion of the hour. After the revolution of July, 1830, they assumed a conservative position, and after February, 1848, they were no more heard of as a party. Guizot, who was one of its foremost leaders, fled to England, but subsequently returned to France.

D. & F.—Two brown-haired, blue-eyed girls want costumes for a masquerade party. Why not go as flower girl and shepherdess? The flower girl would look pretty in a blue or pink lawn dress, plain, full skirt reaching to the ankle, high-necked bodice gathered to a belt, short puffed sleeves, a coquettish white muslin apron filled with flowers, and a fancy basket of these on her arm. She wears a wide straw hat turned up on one side. Either slippers or high shoes. The shepherdess requires a red, quilted short skirt, a white bodice with full sleeves, a flat straw hat and a crook tied with blue ribbon. Also grey silk stockings and buckled shoes.

C. H. H.—It is allowable, and in some cases desirable, upon receiving a brief business letter, to write the reply on the same page, immediately beneath the original communication, thus returning both together. By this means the whole matter is brought up before the writer's mind without any effect. Of course, if the original letter occupies one side of the paper, the reply may be written on the other without violating any of the rules of business etiquette. In such cases it is always well to indicate the fact of the reply being written on the other side of the sheet by placing the word "over" at the bottom of the first page.

MINA.—Pastry is much more easily made in cold weather than in warm. In summer it should be made in a cool place, and the butter should be kept in ice-water until you are ready to use it. Take two-thirds of butter, and the same of flour, and mix it together gradually with a spoon, not touching it with the hand; then put it on the board, and roll it out; spread over the rest of the butter, and roll it up; mix in this butter as lightly as possible; then roll it out and make the pies, using the rest of the flour in doing so. A marble board is the best for making pastry. Before using the flour wet it, in summer, with ice-water.

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